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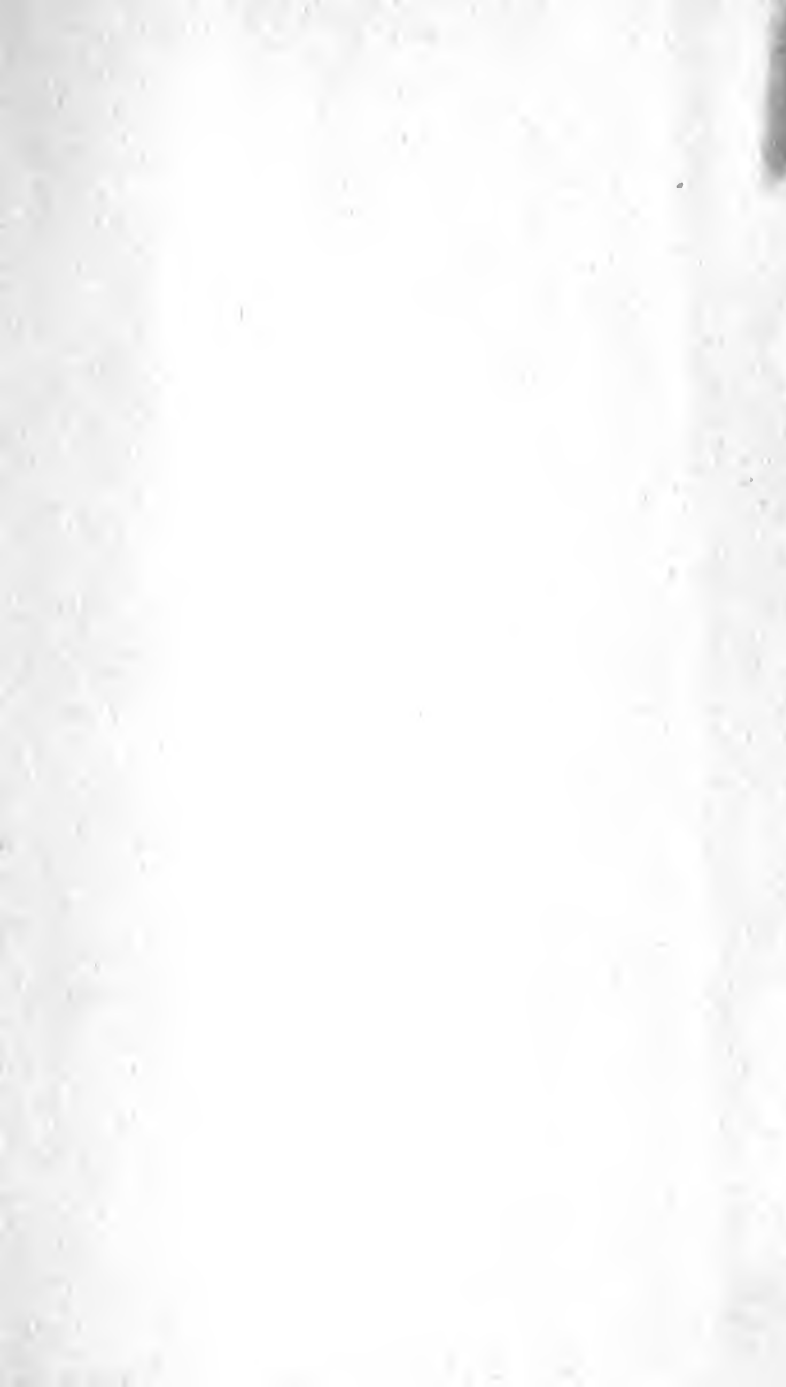






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A

# SKETCH OF OLD ENGLAND,

BY A NEW ENGLAND MAN.

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“Republicanism, as it exists beyond the Atlantic, in all the glories of bundling, gogging, negro-driving, and dram-drinking; such poems as the Columbiad; such speeches as Mr. Adams makes at convivial meetings; and young ladies, who, when asked to dance, reply, “I guess I have no occasion.”

QUARTERLY REVIEW.

“Often while waiting at table, and listening to their disgusting opinions, I have been called forward by one of the guests, and struck in the face merely for some trivial mistake I had committed in serving him with food. In South Carolina the guests do not hesitate to chastise their entertainers’ servants whenever they feel disposed; and a party of white people there, often make cursing and beating their slaves in attendance, their chief employment during dinner.”

BLACKWOOD’S MAGAZINE.

“Any American will gratify a stranger by giving an account of himself; and if the truth is unfavourable to him, he will invent falsehoods, rather than not play the egotist.”  
“The Americans are more detestable than any other people under the influence of ardent spirits. Liquor only serves to draw forth their natural coarseness, insolence, and rankness of feelings.”

HOWISON’S TRAVELS.

“These scourgers and murderers of slaves.”

EDINBURGH REVIEW.

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SHACKELL AND ARROWSMITH, JOHNSON'S COURT

## SKETCH OF OLD ENGLAND.

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### LETTER I.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

I AM now comfortably and quietly settled in lodgings, with an elderly lady, who has good blood in her veins ; that is to say, if blood be an hereditary commodity, which some people doubt, but which I do not, for there are diseases bodily and mental in most of the old families here that have descended through half-a-score of wealthy generations. She claims descent from Tudors and Plantagenets to boot, and combines the conflicting claims of both York and Lancaster. Though too well bred to boast, she sometimes used to mention these matters, until one day I advised her, in jest, to procure a champion to tilt against young parson Dymoke for the broom at the ensuing coronation. The good old soul took the joke ill, and I was sorry for it. What right had I to ridicule that which, to her, was an innocent source of happiness? I despise the cant of sentiment, but I promise never to do so again.

She has a number of noble relatives among the respectable, old-fashioned nobility, who still possess some of that sturdy, antique morality and honesty, now so scarce among this class throughout all Christendom. Their occasional visits in the dusk of the evening, and the contemplation of her own august descent, seem to constitute her little fund of worldly enjoyment. It is so blameless, that I humour her by often enquiring the names of her visitors ; which gives occasion to a variety of family details and claims of kindred, distant enough to be sure, but still sufficient to support the little edifice of vanity, erected in her heart upon the tombs of her ancestors. The old matron

is excessively methodical, and particularly neat in her dress—hates Napoleon Buonaparte with a zeal past all human understanding, and has brought to war against him most exclusively several passages of the Old and New Testaments.

Comfort, neatness, and economy distinguish her household, from the cellar to the garret. Nothing is wasted, nothing is wanting. Such, indeed, is her economy, that I verily believe she never throws away a pin for want of a head, or a needle for being without an eye. This economy is neither the offspring of meanness nor avarice, but the rational result of a determination to preserve her independence. Her means are just sufficient, with this rigid economy, to enable her to appear with that sober sort of gentility, which it is her pride and delight ever to exhibit. Were she to relax in any one respect the nice system would lose its balance and fall to the ground. To sum up all, she is so perfectly upright in all her dealings, that, I am satisfied, no prospect of impunity, no certainty of escaping discovery or suspicion, would tempt her to defraud the living or the dead, or receive more than her due. It is amusing to see her uneasiness at incurring the slightest obligation, or being subjected to the smallest debt. I happened to pay the postage of a letter one day for her in her absence, and she was quite unhappy because I could not make change, and release her from the obligation. She and I are great friends after the *cold English fashion*. If I be sick, every attention is scrupulously paid, but paid as if from a sense of propriety, not from the heart. Our occasional conversations are friendly, but formal; rather genealogical I confess, but let that pass—the old lady comes from Wales. Still I cannot help respecting her most sincerely, and I feel more at home in her house than any place where I have sojourned since I left my own home. I have been the more particular in my sketch, because she belongs to a class of females which once gave a character to England, and to English domestic life, of which the country yet feels the benefit, in the enjoyment of a reputation for integrity, founded on the past, rather than the present. It was this homely honesty, this inflexible regard to principle, which made amends for the absence of those easy and sprightly manners, which attach a stranger, who is generally more in want of courtesies than benefits, and consequently forms his estimate of a people from their general deportment, rather than from any particular act of kindness. This class is, however, I regret to say, daily mouldering away amidst the speculating extravagance and splendid pauperism of the times. They cannot keep pace with the more numerous class of the nobility and gentry, because their pride will not stoop to an alliance with vulgar



wealth, nor their principles bend to earn the rewards of the government by the sacrifice of their integrity.

Our house is situated in one of the old streets, running into \*\*\*\*\* which, though rather narrow, was considered quite genteel until lately, but a corrector of enormities in beards made a lodgment directly over the way, and poked his pole at an angle of some forty degrees, almost into the old lady's window. This awful invasion put to flight two persons of quality, who lodged in the house. "'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good," and I was wafted by this breeze into lodgings that suit me exactly. Adieu.

## LETTER II.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

I invaded London under cover of a great fog, somewhat similar to that recorded on new year's eve in 1730, when, it is stated, that many persons fell into Fleet-ditch, and several prominent noses sustained serious damage by coming in contact with each other. Among the few objects I could see, was a person with a lantern, who, I suppose, like *Æsop*, was looking about for an honest man. You may think, my dear brother, how scarce honest men must be in London. Alighting from the stage, there was a great contest for the privilege of carrying my trunks, like that of the Greeks and Trojans for the body of *Patroclus*. In conclusion, the *Greek* carried the day, as I found, for a good-natured person apprised me, that if I permitted their attendance, I should probably never see my trunks again. I was not aware of the necessity of this caution, as you know in our own dear honest country, no man hesitates a moment to trust his baggage with the first porter that offers, be he black or white. This is not one of those solitary instances from which no general conclusions can be drawn. It furnishes decisive proof, that at least one class of people of this country is not as honest as the same class in ours.

To escape the hacks I called a hack, and by that means fell "out of the frying-pan into the fire;" that is, if rushing upon a positive evil to escape a probable one, will justify the old proverb. He charged me three times the amount of his fare, and gave me a few bad shillings in change. These bad shillings are, in truth, as common as counterfeit notes in our country, and strangers should be equally aware of them. Well, he drove me to the \*\*\*\*\* coffee-house, the name of which, being derived from my own country, attracted the yearnings of my inclination. Here the master of the house very soon

satisfied me I had been cheated. But as hackney-coachmen are for the most part rogues in grain, all over the world, new and old, I determined, in my own mind, to let John Bull off that time, and not denounce him on the score of this universal characteristic of a particular species of men.

The master of the house advised me to buy a "Picture of London," which I did, (not the bastard work yeapt the *new* Picture, but the genuine standard work) and much consolation did it afford me. Among the first choice passages I fell upon, were the following: "Any man who saunters about London, with pockets on the outside of his coat, or who mixes in crowds without especial care of his pockets, *deserves no pity on account of the losses he may sustain.*" Again: "Persons should be very particular as soon as they have called a hackney-coach, to observe the number, before they get into it. This precaution guards against imposition, or unforeseen accidents. There is no other method of punishing coachmen who misbehave, nor chance of recovering property carelessly left in the coach, but by the recollection of the number." Now, brother, I could not come within a thousand of the number of my coach, for I had no idea of being cheated by a hackney-coachman in this honest country.

For the benefit of any of your honest neighbours, who may chance to visit this city, and be cheated before they can get a "Picture of London," I will extract one or two more passages from that valuable work:

"One of the most dangerous classes of swindlers are those pretended porters or clerks, who attend about the doors of inns at the time the coaches are unloading; or who watch the arrival of post-chaises at the doors of the coffee-houses. These fellows, by various artifices, frequently obtain possession of the luggage of a traveller, who has occasion to lament the want of suspicion, in the loss of his clothes and other effects."

"Mock auctions, in which plated goods are sold for silver, and a variety of incredible frauds practised upon the unwary, ought to be cautiously avoided. They may be in general known by a person being placed at the door to invite in the passing stranger."

"Strangers having business at Doctors' Commons, should previously know the address of a proctor, as all the avenues are beset by *inferior clerks or porters*, who watch and accost strangers, whom they take into some office, where they are paid in proportion to the nature of the business, which is conducted not in the most respectable way, and never without extra charges unwarranted by the profession."

"In asking questions, or enquiring the way, it is necessary always to apply at a shop, or a public-house, and never to

rely upon the information which may be given by persons in the streets."

Such, brother, are a few of the dangers which beset the traveller, in his adventurous pilgrimage through this wilderness of two-legged beasts of prey.

My experience at Liverpool and elsewhere having taught me somewhat, I began to smell a rat, almost the first moment I entered the coffee-house. The waiters were excessively officious, and so anxious to put themselves in my way, when there was no occasion, that I was quite out of patience. The master of the house too, a most important little busy body, made me bow upon bow: all which being contrary to the very nature of an Englishman, I took it for granted that he meant to cheat me. Accordingly, the first day at dinner, he gave me a bottle of half-guinea wine, of the most pestiferous quality, which he pronounced such as Lord Somebody always called for at his house. The next day he gave me still worse, finding I put up with the first, and charged me still higher, on the score of its being a favourite wine of some noble Earl. The third day it was still worse and still dearer, because his Grace of ——— always drank it in preference to any other. Thinking it best to get out of the way, before mine host came to the king's favourite wine, which, according to the preceding steps of the climax, must have been execrable, I got a friend to recommend me to another lodging, who accordingly negotiated the terms, and stood security for my character with the excellent lady, with whom I still remain. On leaving the coffee-house, I was beset by the whole clan of domestics, from the head-waiter in broad-cloth to *boots* in dirt. The landlord made me a sort of half bow, and I complimented him on his Grace's favourite wine, and thus we parted, never, never, never, to meet again, as your sentimental letter-writers say.

The physiognomy of London is by no means inviting, especially that part which was laid out, and built, before the nobility and the rich took it into their wise heads to spend their incomes in town, rather than among their tenants in the country. In some of the new and fashionable squares the buildings are sufficiently aristocratic; but with here and there an exception, the houses bear the stamp of something like republicanism or equality. In general, they are quite comfortable in appearance, but nothing more. The greater proportion of fine buildings is the offspring of public spirit, which certainly, at times, has produced as great wonders in England as in any other part of the world. The merchants, the companies of artizans, indeed almost all classes of people, except the nobility, have vied with each other in public works, either of splendor or

utility, or generally both combined. The nobility have contented themselves with building palaces for their own private use. It may be said, perhaps, that vanity must have its gratification in some way or other, and that those who cannot build a palace individually, must compound by doing it in company with others; thus making a general rather than an individual property. It may be so, but still the public is a gainer by the latter plan, since we can go into some of these for nothing, whereas the palaces are only shown for money.

One thing that has disgusted me most in this city, is the incredible quantity of wretched and profligate beggars who infest many parts, whose ragged, filthy, and debauched appearance turns pity into absolute disgust. I was, the other day, admiring the magnificence of a new palace in one of the fine squares, with my head full of the splendors of this people, when, all at once, my visions of glory were put to flight by the irruption of a family of most wretched beings of all ages, from the gray-headed parent to the little infant holding by the mother's hand. Their story was that of thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands, in this government-ridden nation: want of employment and want of food. If true, it proved how much they were to be pitied; if false, how yet much more they were to be pitied. If necessity drove them to this wretched mode of life, they might still derive some consolation from within;—if choice, then were they wretched indeed. The splendor of the palace vanished like those of the wicked enchanters of old, and little else remained on my mind but the impression that its walls were reared upon the miseries of thousands of such as were now begging at the door.

Another bad feature in the physiognomy of London, is the number and the profligacy of certain ladies, anciently called the *Bishop of Winchester's Geese*. Their effrontery, their shocking depravity, disgusting indecency, and total destitution of every female characteristic, are horrible. Indéed, brother, every species of vice is displayed here in its naked deformity, and with a broad and vulgar grossness, that renders London a complete contrast to Paris, at least, in outward appearance.

### LETTER III.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

ALMOST the first thing that strikes an American, used to the clear skies and glowing sunshine of his own country, is the humidity of the atmosphere, and the frequent absence of the god

of day. St. Simon and Jude's day is almost every other day here. It rains or snows about one hundred and fifty days in the year; and of the remainder, between fifty and sixty are cloudy. The result is, that the verdure of the country is excessively luxuriant, although, to my mind, the landscapes rather weep than laugh. The grass and the foliage are so deadly green, that they almost look blue, and resemble the effect of distance, which, you know, communicates a bluish tint to the landscape. But the grass grows and the cattle get fat, and the roast beef of Old England is the better for it, undoubtedly. To me, however, who you know love the sunshine like a ter-rapin, there is something chilly and ungenial in the English summer, and it offends me hugely to hear a fat, puffing, beer-drinking fellow, bawling out to his neighbour, "A fine day," when the sun looks as if it might verify the theory of one of the old Greeks, that it was nothing more than a great round ball of copper. Whether this melancholy character in the climate, or the practice of drinking beer in such enormous quantities, or both combined, have given that peculiar cast of bluff and gruff stupidity, observable in the common people of England, I cannot say; but certainly, if "a man who drinks beer thinks beer," the question is decided at once.

To describe, or even to name, all the villages and seats which I passed, in going out of London at different times, is a task I shall not undertake, and which indeed can only be done by a person with more time on his hands than he knows what to do with, and more patience than time.

Richmond Hill and village, with Twickenham on the opposite side of the Thames, about ten or twelve miles from London, is all classic ground, and worthy to be so. It is, to my mind, the most charming scenery in the *old* world. What makes it the more agreeable to my eye is, that there is plenty of wood, which is wanting in most of the English landscapes, except about the great forests. What with their smooth lawns and trim edges, the landscapes put one in mind of a well shaven beard. But what gives the charm to these scenes is, that they are connected with the shades of Pope and Thomson. The latter lies buried in Richmond church; and thither I went on a pilgrimage, the least a man can do in gratitude for the many hours his genius has embellished and consecrated to pure and innocent enjoyment.

Until the year 1792, there was no inscription over his grave, which is in the north-easterly corner of the church. The Earl of Buchan, Washington's old correspondent, at that time placed over it, against the wall, a brass plate with this inscription:

“ In the earth, beneath this tablet, are the remains of James Thomson, author of the beautiful poems of the Seasons, the Castle of Indolence, &c. &c., who died at Richmond on the 27th day of August, and was buried on the 29th, O. S. 1748. The Earl of Buchan, unwilling so good a man, and so admirable a poet, should be without a memorial, has denoted the place of his interment, for the satisfaction of his admirers, in the year of our Lord 1792.”

But such memorials are rather benefits bestowed upon the giver, than the receiver. No one will ever want a memorial of Thomson, whose Seasons will continue while those he has painted shall roll on their course, and men can read and relish nature and truth. But for this memorial, it might, however, have been speedily forgotten that such a man as my Lord of Buchan ever existed.

I afterwards visited a house called Rossdale, where the poet resided, and wrote the Seasons, and where many reliques are still preserved. I was particularly struck with a little, round, old-fashioned table, on which he was accustomed to write, and which excited my reverence infinitely more than Arthur's Round Table, which I afterwards saw at Winchester. There are also two brass hooks, where he always hung his hat and cane, for he was a man of habits, and seldom deviated from them. In the garden was his favourite haunt, a summer-house, overshadowed with luxuriant vines. Solitude and solitary rambling constituted the pleasures of Thomson; and it was doubtless from these habits of walking alone, observing all the latent, and inherent, and even accidental charms of nature, and reflecting upon them as he rambled along, that he was enabled to combine natural and moral beauties so delightfully in his pictures. I wish he had been buried somewhere in the fields, where the grass and the flowers might have sprung on his grave, and realized the inimitable beauty of the verses of Collins to his memory—

“ In yonder grave a druid lies,  
Where slowly winds the stealing wave,  
The year's best fruit shall duteous rise  
To deck their Poet's sylvan grave.”

Twickenham, where Pope's villa once was, is a village opposite Richmond, to which you pass by a bridge. The house which the poet inhabited is pulled down, but the famous grotto remains, a pretty and fantastic monument of expensive folly. Pope had better have held his tongue about “ Timon's villa,” and its fripperies; for, to my taste, this grotto is totally unworthy of any reputable nymphs of either wood or water. It is

neither splendid by art, nor magnificent, nor solemn by nature, and is, in truth, an excellent place for keeping milk and butter cool. I felt no reverence whatever for it, and heartily wished the grotto, rather than the house, had been destroyed.

Perhaps I am singular; but though I am one of Pope's greatest admirers, and think him in many, very many respects, unequalled, as well as inimitable, his name, somehow or other, does not carry with it those warm and affecting feelings of admiration, as well as regret, which are conjured up by the recollection of many other bards. It is true, he was rich, was cherished by the great, and lived all his days in sunshine. He reaped, during his life, that fame, as well as fortune, the one of which few poets receive till after death, and the other most want while alive. There was nothing in his whole life either romantic or affecting, nothing to call forth sympathy. But these circumstances, of themselves, are not sufficient to account for my want of enthusiasm at visiting the spot where he lived, wrote, and died.

It is for these reasons, probably, combined with the causes before mentioned, that Twickenham and Pope's grotto does not elevate the heart with those affecting, yet lofty emotions, that arise from contemplating the little round table, and the vine-covered summer-house, of the author of *Liberty*, the *Seasons*, and the *Castle of Indolence*. Pope is the poet of those who reason rather than feel; the poet of the understanding, and of men past the age of romantic delusions: Thomson is the poet of youth, nature, and an uncorrupted heart. The one is a man of the world, the other a druid of the woods and melancholy streams, the beautiful and sublime of nature.

I do not know any thing more affecting than a passage in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, which is recalled to my mind by these speculations. He was always poor, and in his latter days a martyr to disease, slow, yet sure in its progress. It was, perhaps, while tasting in advance the immortality he has since attained that he broke out into the following invocation:

"Come, bright love of fame, inspire my glowing breast! Not thee I call, who over swelling tides of blood and tears dost bear the hero on to glory, while sighs of millions waft his swelling sails; but thee, fair, gentle maid, whom Mnæsis, happy nymph, first on the banks of Hebrus did produce; thee, whom Mæonia educated, whom Mantua charmed, and who, on that fair hill, which overlooks the proud metropolis of Britain, satest with thy Milton tuning the heroic lyre—fill my ravished fancy with the hope of charming ages yet to come. Foretell me that some tender maid, whose grandmother is yet unborn,

hereafter, when, under the fictitious name of Sophia, she reads the real worth that once existed in my Charlotte, shall from her sympathetic breast send forth the heaving sigh! Do thou teach me not only to foresee, but feed on future praise! *Comfort me by a solemn assurance, that when the little parlour, in which I sit at this instant, shall be reduced to a worse-furnished box, I shall be read with honour, by those who never knew or saw me, and whom I shall never see or know.*"

The man who could dream, and dream truly too, could not be miserable, even amid the neglect of fortune and the scorn of fools. This secret consciousness is the staff which supports and rewards genius in its weary pilgrimage.

#### LETTER IV.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

IN the neighbourhood of Richmond, I was attracted by the appearance of a grand house, which, upon inquiry, I learned was built by a noted brewer of that village. This monument of the inveterate beer-drinking propensity of the nation, is one of the largest private dwellings I have seen in this country. The story went, that it was finally devised to an Oxfordshire baronet, who, not dealing in beer, could not afford to keep up the establishment. He accordingly sold every thing about it but the walls, and here it stands ready for the next portly brewer, who shall be smitten with the desire of building up a name in stone and mortar. The labours and the parsimony of years are very often employed in this manner, by the rich tradesmen of London, whose estates, not being in general entailed, like those of the nobility and gentry, are for the most part divided in such a manner, that not one of the heirs can afford to live in the great house. It is therefore either sold out of the family, or its deserted walls remain as a monument of ostentatious folly.

I also reconnoitred Osterley house, which attracted my notice, not so much for its magnificence, as its history. Every schoolboy has heard of Sir Thomas Gresham, the great merchant, who built the Royal Exchange, and gave such grand entertainments to Queen Elizabeth, who loved nothing better than feasting at the expence of other people. There is an old story, that Elizabeth, being at a great entertainment at Osterley, found fault with the court, as being too large, and gave her opinion, that it would look better divided in two parts. Sir Thomas, like another Aladdin, but by means of an agent more powerful even than the genius of the lamp, that very night



caused the alteration to be made, so that next morning the queen, looking out, saw the court divided according to her taste. Her majesty, it is said, was exceedingly gratified with this proof of his gallantry; but passed what was considered rather a sore joke upon Sir Thomas, saying, "That a house was much easier divided than united." Lady Gresham and Sir Thomas, it seems, were at issue on the point of domestic supremacy; and Elizabeth, who hated all married women, was supposed to allude to this matrimonial schism.

In going towards Uxbridge, which is twelve or fifteen miles from this city, on the road to Oxford, there is a fine old place called Harefield, where once resided the famous Countess of Derby, the friend and admirer of that illustrious republican poet, John Milton. It was here that Milton's Arcades were represented, and in this neighbourhood the poet resided some years with his father. It was for the son of this lady he wrote the richest, the most poetical of all human productions, the *Masque of Comus*. Nobility becomes really illustrious when connected by friendship and benefits with the immortality of genius. Milton was an inflexible Republican in his political principles, and sided with the Parliament in its attempts to resist the tyrannical encroachments of Charles the First. In this situation he had an opportunity of saving the life of Sir William Davenant, who was taken up on a charge of being an emissary of Charles the Second, then in exile. On the Restoration Milton was excepted from the general amnesty, but was finally pardoned, as it is said, by the intercession of Sir William Davenant, who thus repaid his former good offices. His politics prevented his being a fashionable poet. His *Paradise Lost* was sold to the bookseller for one-tenth of the sum since paid for a dainty song by Tom Moore, set to music; and the bad taste or servility of the critics suffered it to be forgotten, till Addison at length did ample justice to its beauties. Milton is rather in the back-ground at present, being quite eclipsed by the superior merits of Mr. Croly, Mr. Southey, Lord Byron, and the "Great Unknown." The *Quarterly Review* will certainly, ere long, convict him either of a want of genius, or a lack of religion, if it be only on account of his having been a Republican.

I dined at Uxbridge; and as no experienced English traveller ever omits making honourable or dishonourable mention of the inns, I must inform you, for your particular satisfaction, that those of Uxbridge, although specially noted by Camden, are none of the best.

Pursuing my route towards Oxford, I again got upon classic ground, about *Stoke Poges*, in the neighbourhood of which

the poet Gray resided with his mother. He was a frequent visitor to the noble family there, and wrote his "Long Story" at the request of the ladies. To me it appears the very worst thing he ever did write; a very dull and doggrel ditty, with only one line in it worth preserving. Gray was ashamed of it, and tried to destroy all the copies; but the industry of editors, and the cupidity of booksellers, unhappily preserved it for posterity to wonder at. The Muses used to keep a little court at different times hereabouts. Milton lived not far off at Horton; Waller at Beaconsfield; and Pope occasionally in Windsor Forest. Edmund Burke also once occupied Waller's mansion at Beaconsfield; and if being under the dominion of imagination constitutes a poet, may certainly be classed with the trio. In the neighbourhood of Beaconsfield they shew an old hollow tree, in which, it is affirmed, Waller wrote many of his poems. I do not believe much of the story, yet still it is pleasant to see old hollow trees derive an interest from these associations, that the residence of monarchs cannot confer upon the most splendid palaces. In deviating, just as the roads occasionally offered inducement, I had a view of a fine old palace, once the property of the Hampdens, a name so well known in our country for inflexible patriotism, that it is often adopted with that of Russell and Sydney, by those who advocate the rights of the people. The family of Hampden was of great antiquity, of the genuine old Saxon blood, without any mixture of Norman. The gentry who came over with William the Conqueror were mere upstarts of the day before yesterday, compared with the Hampdens. But I was not thinking of their antiquity. As I contemplated the venerable pile, I was recalling to mind that noble Englishman, who was the first to put himself in the breach between an arbitrary king and an abused people; of the man who dared to appeal to the laws of his country against the oppression of his sovereign to judges who betrayed their trust, and sacrificed their conscience at the shrine of a time-serving interest. Eight out of twelve decided against Hampden; but though he lost his cause with the judges he gained it with the people, and the decision became one of the principal grounds of the revolution that followed. Of such a man it is of little moment who were his ancestors; the blood that flowed in his veins was noble of itself without tracing it to a noble ancestry.—But the name and the race are now no more, or, beyond doubt, we should see some of them at this moment foremost in the ranks, resisting the torrent of corruption, venality and boundless extravagance of this government. The great John Hampden is acknowledged, even by Hume, the apologist of the Stuarts, to have been a man of the purest

patriotism; and such was the spotlessness of his character, that not one of the apologists of kingly pretension has ventured to impeach his motives or attack his memory. He was a near kinsman of Cromwell, and fell in action early in the commencement of the war between the people and the king. His grandson became involved in the South Sea scheme, and died by his own hands; he was succeeded by his brother, who dying without issue, the estates fell to a Trevor, who now bears the title of Viscount Hampden. To the disgrace of his country, I believe Hampden's life has never been written—at least, I have not been able to procure it at any of the booksellers!—It is said he was one of those who took passage with Cromwell for New-England, and were stopped by an order of council. I cannot but regret that he did not reach our country, for perhaps he might have left there a posterity worthy the soil of freedom. Hampden was always a friend to our New England—may we never lose the recollection of his virtues or his friendship!

It is traditionary of the Hampdens, that they owned vast possessions in the time of Edward the Third, a considerable portion of which was forfeited by the heir of the family, (in consequence of some provocation not exactly known,) for giving the Black Prince a box on the ear. There is extant a couplet, which has reference to that circumstance.

“Tring, Wing, and Ivengo did go,  
For striking the Black Prince a blow.”

You see, brother, the Hampdens were, from the first, gifted with the spirit of freemen. It is a pity the race is extinct; for never did England more require such men as Hampden and Sydney. She has yet a Russell in the person of Lord John, one of the most respectable and patriotic noblemen in the kingdom.

Leaving this old nest of the eagles, I returned into the Oxford road, and pursued my way towards that famous city of the Muses, that is to say, the Prize Muses; for the Sacred Nine of Oxford never sing now, except when tempted by a medal. Palaces and fine seats were sprinkled thickly by the road-side; but as they contained little else but a collection of pictures to attract the stranger, I passed them by. Few things, in this world of trouble, are more intolerable than a visit to one of these *show-places*, where one is not only obliged to pay for opening every door, but, what is still worse, to listen to the eternal gabble of a cicerone by rote, who will by no means permit a man to consult his own taste in the selection of objects of admiration. The only way to silence one of those is to

give him a shilling when he expects half a guinea. He will never speak more, depend upon it.

The sunset, I remember, was exceedingly unpropitious to my entrance into Oxford, for it set in a profound English mist. I had been forewarned and fore-armed of the beauties of the place, and that I should enter it by one of the finest and longest streets in the world. It certainly was long enough, for I thought never to have got to the end of it; but its beauties were too modest to meet the ardent gaze of a stranger, and retired quietly behind the fog.

I was ready to be pleased with every thing; and never, I believe, were the noble fanes of Oxford admired by a more enthusiastic votary. Learning was, for once in her life, lodged in palaces, some of which were so lofty and majestic, that I actually mistook them for poor-houses, which are beyond all comparison the most sumptuous edifices in this country. I cannot describe them, nor recollect half that I saw in this Gothic heaven. I had introductions to some of the jolly fellows; but they were of very little use to me, owing to a most untoward matter, which I shall proceed to disclose, which disturbed the prize muses, and occupied the exclusive attention of every member of the university, from the vice-chancellor, in his white band, to the students in their black caps. To explain it properly, I must furnish you with a few preliminaries, concerning the peculiar constitution and privileges of the university, without which it would be difficult to comprehend the nature of the case.

The University of Oxford is governed by its own peculiar laws, which are administered, or ought to be, by a great officer, called the chancellor; but as almost every great office is executed here by a deputy or sub-deputy, the chancellor nominates to the university two persons, one to be chosen high steward, the other vice-chancellor. The high steward assists the proctors, if required, in the performance of their duties, and hears and decides all capital cases, arising within the jurisdiction of the university, when required by the chancellor. The vice-chancellor is, in almost every other respect, the deputy of the chancellor; he receives the rents due to the university, licenses taverns, &c. and, to use the words of an old author, "he takes care that sermons, lectures, disputations, and other exercises be performed; that heretics, panders, bawds, *Winchester geese*, &c. be expelled the university, and the converse of the students; that the proctors and other officers do their duty; that courts be duly called and law-suits determined, without delay; in a word, that whatever is for the honour or the profit of the university, or may conduce to the

advantage of good literature, may be carefully obtained." The vice-chancellor, at his entrance into office, chooses two pro-vice-chancellors out of the heads of colleges, to one of whom he deposes his power during his absence. The high steward is chosen for life, but the vice-chancellor is nominated annually, and is always a person in holy orders as well as the head of a college. Now for the affair which so effectually disturbed the repose, not to say the profound sleep, of this temple of the Muses.

It seems a ferocious tailor, not having the fear of the vice-chancellor before his eyes, had brought a suit against a student of *Brazen-nose*, in the court of King's Bench, when the statute prescribed that he should bring it before the vice-chancellor. The vice-chancellor, indignant at this contempt of his authority, hereupon summoned the tailor before him, and addressed him, as is affirmed, in something like the following, when he found that the souls of nine stout heroes were domiciled in the body of this ninth part of a man :

"Avaunt and quit my sight !

Thy shears are edgeless : thou hast no thread and needle

In those paws, that thou dost stitch withal.

Approach thee like an Edinburgh Reviewer,

French sans-culotte, or damned democrat,

The Carbonari, half-starv'd radical,

Or Cato Street conspirator !

Nay, come like nonconformists in a row,

And swear that church and tithes shall be no more ;

Moot points of logic with a cambric needle ;

Or, cross-legg'd, like a rascal papist, sit,

With thimble on thy pate instead of helmet,

And dare me to the shopboard with thy shears,

But never dare me to the king's bench court—

Skip, stitch-louse, skip, I say !"

"Ay, ay," cried this unparalleled tailor ; "ay, ay, Mr. Vice, you may talk Latin as much as you please ; but, in plain English, I must have my money, and, what's more, I will. I have had enough of dunning ; and as for bringing a suit in your courts here, I recovered one not long ago, and was almost ruined by it." The vice-chancellor, it is affirmed, did not swear : but it was the general opinion he would have done it, had he not been a clergyman.

The recreant tailor brought the curse of Ernulphus upon him ; he was cursed in all the moods and tenses ; in Latin and English ; and would have been cursed in Greek and Hebrew, had any of the present professors been sufficiently versed in those tongues. He was formally excommunicated ; his shop windows hermetically sealed, and himself prohibited from labour-

ing in his vocation for the fiery students of Brazen-nose; his business was doomed to destruction here, and his soul hereafter. Still the thrice, and nine times valiant tailor, refused to take a single back-stitch or herring-bone, either to the right or to the left; he continued to demur to the jurisdiction of the vice-chancellor, and to stand by the King's Bench, which, next to the shopboard, he looked upon to be the purest seat of justice in the kingdom. "I defy the d—l and all his imps!" said the tailor, snapping his fingers; which saying was held to be a reflection upon the vice-chancellor and the scholars.

In this state the matter remained all the time I staid at Oxford, which was nearly a week. The tailor was the greatest man of the age; another Caliph Omar, enemy to learning and orthodoxy. His name was in every body's mouth, and the Muses, all nine of them, sung in praise of this ninth part of a man. The Senior Wrangler was deputed to argue with him, but the tailor got him betwixt the sharp shears of his logic, and almost cut him in two. A *Terræ Filius* was next sent; but, though his speech was bitterly satirical, the tailor remained as immovable as the sun himself. At prayers, and lectures, the students could think of nothing but the tailor; the jolly fellows could not sleep quietly upon the "Pennyless Bench" over their ale, for thinking of the tailor; the sempstresses, who are very pretty at Oxford, marked nothing on their linen, but tailor; the little boys at catechism, answered nothing but "the tailor" to all questions; and several children, born about this time, cried for their nurses' thimbles before they were a day old. Never, in fact, since the days of the furious contests between the students of the "north and south," recorded by Anthony Wood, was the seat of the prize Muses in such a consternation. I left the place before the matter was settled, with a determination that if the tailor were ever restored to the use of his weapons, and I ever had an opportunity, he should make me a full suit of the cloth called Thunder and Lightning, which cannot but equal armour of proof, considering his indomitable and valorous propensities.

Notwithstanding, however, the confusion which I have described, I gained sufficient opportunity to put my nose into some of the old rusty remains of antiquity, which abound in this place. Among these, the Bodleian Library, the Ashmolean Museum, and the Arundel and Pomfret Marbles, are particularly curious and interesting. In the libraries are many notices of the early events which occurred in different ages, which throw vast light upon the state of manners, and mark the gradual changes produced by time and circumstances. As such, they are highly worthy of notice, and if I had possessed

sufficient time or patience, I would have made copious extracts from them. As it was, I could only copy a few of such as I considered might contribute to the future instruction or amusement of my friends. I will select some of these, pretty much as they occur in my memorandum-book. They are principally taken from Anthony Wood, whose work is a sort of store-house of Oxford antiquities. The nature of his book may be gathered from Wood's complaint of one John Shirley, *Terræ Filius* of Trinity College, in 1673, who said, "That the society of Merton would not let me live in the college, for fear I should pluck it down to search after antiquities; that I was so great a lover of antiquities, that I loved to live in an old cockle-loft, rather than in a spacious chamber; that I was *vir caducus*; that I intended to put into my book pictures of mother Louse and mother George, two old wives; that I would not let it be printed, because I would not have it new and common." This is the character of Anthony's book, given by a wag, with some little exaggeration, of course.

The state of learning at Oxford, in the thirteenth century, may be gathered from the following: "In the year 1284, John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, came to Oxford, to visit Osney Abbey; which being finished, he called together the masters of the University, who appearing before him, he made a grave speech; then told them of divers erroneous opinions, which they, not becoming their wisdom, did entertain; and that neither by reason, nor upon any scholastical ground, but for the cause of commotion, did *impudently* affirm and defend, against the instructions and lessons of the ancient philosophers, and other wise men." Among their grammatical errors, it seems they held "*Ego currit*," and "*Ego legit*," to be good Latin.

As late as the beginning of the sixteenth century, the study of Greek was entirely unknown at Oxford; and, with the exception of Thomas Linacre, and one or two others, who were trying to introduce it into the University, the members treated the study of Greek with contempt. King James the First, with his Queen, in 1605, visited Oxford, and was entertained there with speeches, sermons, comedies, mysteries, and tragedies, for some days. Several regulations were made for their reception, among which, the most remarkable, are the following:

"The University College, All Soules, and Magdalen College, do sett up verses at his Majesty's departure, upon such places where they may be seen as he passeth by."

"Doctor Parry to preach a Latin sermon three quarters of an hour long." It is stated afterwards, that his Majesty "yawned mightily," on this occasion; indeed, he seems to have been

"mightilye" tired of the whole visit, if we may credit the chronicler, who gives the following account of his behaviour at a comedy :—

"The Comedy," quoth he, "began at between nine and ten, and ended at one; the name of it was *Alba*, whereof I never knew the reason; it was a pastoral, much like one I had seen in King's College, Cambridge." "There were many rustically songes and dances, which made it very tedious, insomuch that if the chancellors of both Universities had not entreated his Majesty earnestly, he would have been gone before half the comedy had been ended."

Neither did His Majesty, it seems, relish their tragedy better than their comedy. The same writer, who, you may depend upon it, was a *Cantab*, proceeds to record—"The next morning and afternoon we passed in hearing sermons and disputations. The same day after supper, about nine of the clock, they began to act the tragedy of *Ajax Flagellifer*, wherein the stage varied three times; they had all goodly antique apparel, for all that, it was not acted so well by many degrees as I have seen it in Cambridge. The King was very weary before he came thither, and much more wearied by it, and spoke many words of dislike."

A comedy called *Vertumnus* was next day represented, and though allowed by our *Cantab* to be much better performed than the others, "yet the King was so overwearied, that after a while he distasted it and fell asleep; when he awakened, he would have him gone, saying, I marvel what they think me to be, with such other like speeches, shewing his dislike thereof; yet did he tarry till they had ended it, which was after one o'clock." The only thing that pleased his Majesty, was a "discreet and learned speech by Dr. Warner, dissuading men from tobacco, by good reasons and apt similes, backed by twenty syllogisms, which so delighted the great opponent of tobacco, that he said to the nobles about him, "God keep this fellow in a right course, he would prove a dangerous heretic; he is the best disputer I ever heard."

The poverty of the students at Oxford, in the middle of the sixteenth century, was such, that many of them were obliged to get a license from the chancellor to beg, and it appears that it was at that time common for them to go "a-begging with bags and wallets, and sing *Salve Regina* at rich men's dores." "The students were about this time (1559) so poor and beggarly, that many of them were forced to obtain licence under the commissary's hand to require alms of well-disposed people; and indeed the want of exhibitions and charity of religious people, was so much, that their usual saying now was,

"*Sunt muta musa, nostraque fama fumes.*"



The following clerical anecdotes may amuse you, at the same time that they illustrate the style of preaching, as well as the charity of the priests of those times:—

“Richard Taverer, Esq., did several times preach at Oxford, and when he was high sheriff of the county, came into St. Mary’s church, out of pure charity, with a gold chain about his neck, and a sword, it is said, by his side.” One of his sermons began as follows:—

“Arriving at the mount of St. Mary’s, in the strong stage (the stone pulpit) where I now stand, I have brought you some fyne bisketts baked in the oven of charitye, carefully conserved for the chickens of the church, the sparrows of the spirit, and the sweet swallows of salvation.” Mr. Sheriff Taverer must have been another Friar Gerund.

Two itinerant priests coming, says Anthony Wood, towards night, to a cell of Benedictines near Oxford, where, on a supposition of their being mimes or minstrels, they gained admittance. But the cellarer, sacristan, and others of the brethren, hoping to have been entertained by their buffoonery, and finding them to be nothing more than two poor priests, who had nothing but spiritual consolation to offer in return for their hospitality, disappointed of their mirth, they beat them soundly and turned them out of the monastery.

The same author gives a character of Sir Walter Raleigh, who was of Oriel College, which I copied for two reasons. Raleigh ought ever to be remembered and honoured in our country, as one of the first who employed his influence and his fortune in laying the foundation of our western empire. “His eminent worth,” says Wood, speaking of Raleigh, “both in domestic polity, foreign expeditions and discoveries, arts and literature, both practive and contemplative, was such, that they seemed at once to conquer both example and imitation. *Those that knew him well, esteemed him to be a person born to that only which he went about, so dexterous was he in all or most of his undertakings, in court, in camp, by sea, by land, with sword, with pen.*”

There is something, I think, singularly and oddly affecting in the following notices of the early Protestant martyrs, which I got out of Strype’s Memorials, an old book in the Bodleian:

“I cannot here omit,” he says, “old Father Latimer’s habit at his appearing before the commissioners, which was also his habit while he remained prisoner at Oxford. He held his hat in his hand; he had a kerchief on his head, and upon it a nightcap or two, and a great cap such as townsmen used, with two broad flaps to button under his chin: an old thread-bare freez-gown of Bristow, girded to his body with a penny leather

girdle, at which hanged, by a long string of leather, his testament and his spectacles, without case, hanging about his neck upon his breast." What would our modern English bishops, with their twenty, thirty, aye, fifty thousands a year, say to this costume of one of the noblest of their tribe? I mean those consistent ones, who, it has been aptly said,—

" All over luxury, they at vice declaim,  
Chide at ill lives, and at good livings aim;  
On down they sleep, on downy carpets tread,  
Their ancestors, th' Apostles, wanted bread!  
At home they lie, with pride, spleen, plenty stor'd,  
And hire some poor dull rogue to serve the Lord."

" In October," continues Strype, " Ridley and Latimer were brought forth to their burning; and passing by Cranmer's prison, Ridley looked up to have seen him, and to have taken his last farewell. But he was not then at the window, being engaged in a dispute with a Spanish friar. But he looked after them, and devoutly falling on his knees, prayed to God to strengthen their faith and patience in that their last but painful passage."

I will conclude this letter with some curious particulars relating to the first introduction of newspapers into England, which took place little more than two hundred years ago.

I am indebted to honest Anthony Wood for the succeeding list, and the particulars collected with so much industry. The first paper mentioned by him is, "*Mercurius Rusticus*, or the Countie's Complaint." It first appeared, he says, the 22d of August, 1642, in a single quarto sheet, and extended to only nineteen or twenty numbers. I believe Wood is mistaken here with regard to this being the first. Cleveland, in giving an account of the London periodicals and diurnals, states, that " the original desiner of this kind was Dutch *Gallo Belgicus*, the *Protoplast*, and the modern Mercuries but *Hans en Kelders*." I have somewhere read, that the *Mercurius-Gallo-Belgicus* is mentioned in Carew's Survey of Cornwall, first published in 1602, and by Donne in some verses of the date of 1611. If the *Mercurius Rusticus* was the first of these diurnals, there is probably some error in the date as set down by Wood.

There was a second part of *Mercurius Rusticus*, giving an account of some outrages committed on the cathedrals in various parts of England. These were all collected in a volume, four or five years after their first publication; but I believe no copy is extant at this time. It would be an invaluable accession to the treasures of his Grace of \*\*\*\*\*,

or my Lord \*\*\*\*\*. These papers were written by one Bruno Ryves, a Dorsetshire man, first one of the clerks in New College, then chaplain to Magdalen, and then "a most noted and florid preacher" at Stanwell, in the County of Middlesex. He afterwards became rector of St. Martin's, London, and chaplain to Charles the First. When the Presbyterians got the upper hand, they turned him out of his rectory, and he fared ill enough, until the Restoration, when he enjoyed several rich benefices, was "sworn scribe" to the order of the garter, and died in 1677.

*Mercurius Aulicus*, the next paper of this kind, was begun at Oxford, where the court then was, in 1642, and continued to be published once a week, till the latter part of 1645, when it ceased to appear with any degree of regularity. Wood says, it had a great deal of wit and buffoonery; and that Nedham, the writer of *Mercurius Britannicus*, was no more to be compared with *Aulicus*, than a dwarf to a giant. *Mercurius Aulicus*, according to Nedham, was the work of several hands, such as George Digby, Secretary Nicholas, and Birkenhead, the scribe. He also says, that each college was assessed both for a weekly contribution of money and wit. But Wood says, that notwithstanding what this liar affirms, all Oxford knew, that John Birkenhead began, and continued them, only that in his absence his place was supplied by Peter Heylin.

Birkenhead was the son of a saddler in Cheshire, and became amanuensis to Archbishop Laud, who got him elected a fellow of All Souls. When the king retired to Oxford, on account of the troubles, Birkenhead began the *Mercurius Aulicus*, which so pleased the King, that he got him appointed reader or professor of Moral Philosophy. Being turned out by the parliamentary ascendancy, he went to London, where he was several times imprisoned, and lived by his wits, in helping young gentlemen out at dead lifts, in making poems, songs, and amorous epistles, to their respective mistresses, &c. On the Restoration times mended with him. He became successively Doctor of Civil Law, member of parliament, knight, a Master of Requests and of the Faculties, and member of the Royal Society. He died in 1679.

*Mercurius Britannicus*, *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, and *Mercurius Politicus*, were all written by Marchmont Nedham, a native of Oxfordshire, who was educated at All Souls college, and afterwards went to London, where he officiated as a schoolmaster or usher at Merchant Tailors. He belonged subsequently to Gray's Inn, where he obtained a comfortable subsistence, until the commencement of the parliamentary war, when, soon siding, says the author, with the rout and scum

of the people, he made them weekly sport by railing at all that was noble and intelligent, in his paper called *Mercurius Britannicus*; wherein his aim was to sacrifice some noble lord, or even the king himself, to the beast with many heads. This prodigy of editorial consistency, however, was either bribed or persecuted into loyalty, since he afterwards was introduced to King Charles, kneeled down, and begged his forgiveness, and had the honour to kiss his majesty's hand. He then attacked his old friends, the Presbyterians, in *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, for which he was caught, imprisoned in Newgate, and escaped with his ears, through the interposition of Lenthall, the Speaker, and Bradshaw, President of the High Court, which brought Charles to the block. These obtained his pardon, I suppose, on condition of his once more changing sides. Accordingly, he commenced a new journal, under the title of *Mercurius Politicus*, in which he treated the cavaliers with as much severity as he had formerly done the Presbyterians. His writings had great influence on the popular feelings; for he was a good scholar, a poet, and a great wag, witty, humorous, and conceited. The royal party pitied him while he continued on their side, but afterwards, he was so much hated by them, that, according to our author, there were many, even in his time, who could not endure to hear Nedham's name mentioned. He died in 1678.

The *Mercurius Britannicus* was published once a week, on Monday, from 1643 to 1647, when the *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, for King Charles, was commenced and ended shortly afterwards, by Nedham again changing sides, and joining his old friends, the Presbyterians, or people. The next series, the *Mercurius Politicus*, it is said, contained many essays against monarchy, and in support of a free state; so much so, that the author was more than once stopped by the interference of the Council of State. Their last order suppressed the paper for the future, in consequence of which, Muddiman and Dury began the publication of a semi-weekly paper, called the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*. To this succeeded the *Mercurius Publicus*, which was continued by Dury till 1663, when Roger L'Estrange took charge of it, and changed the title successively to the *Public Intelligencer* and *The News*. These continued till 1665, when L'Estrange gave them up, in consequence of the publication of other and cheaper semi-weekly papers. These were the *Oxford Gazette*, by Henry Muddiman, afterwards called the *London Gazette*, when the court removed to London, and placed under the superintendence of Williamson, under-secretary of state, who employed Charles Perrot, A. M. to do the business under him, till the year 1671.

From that time to the period of Wood's writing, they were, he says, constantly written by the under secretaries of state, and so continued.

As the progress of intelligence, and the reception of more free principles prepared the minds of the people to become interested in the affairs of government, newspapers and periodical journals continued to multiply, until it became impossible to keep an account of their successive appearance. Magazines, reviews, and political, and scientific, and literary, and philosophical journals, multiplied apace, until the present time, when our daily opinions can scarcely be said to depend upon any other basis, than the varying interests and temporary supremacy of some one or other of these periodical or diurnal oracles. It is well for us, indeed, that those fundamental rules, those moral axioms, on which the relative duties of man to man, and man to society rest, are beyond the reach of the caprices of fashion, or the schemes of politicians; else we should be in danger of having no stationary land-marks, no God Terminus in morals, to designate either our rights or our duties.

I must not forget to tell you, that there is no place in all Christendom, where they say their prayers so fast as at Oxford.

## LETTER V.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

IN my last, I believe I forgot to inform you of a curious fact recorded, concerning Oxford, in the very tedious, particular, and prosing accounts of those various "Progresses" made by Queen Elizabeth, at various times, through different parts of England, by which she reaped such harvests of popularity, and, what pleased her quite as well, lived at free quarters. There is certainly something servile in the nature of civilized man. An Indian will turn his back on any thing which might be supposed to challenge his admiration among civilized people, because he considers it a sort of acknowledgment of his inferiority, to wonder. Only, however, let a great personage come among a refined people, and they will follow, and shout at his heels, and wonder, and be delighted beyond measure, whenever he smiles, bows, or exhibits any of those ordinary condescensions which gentlemen usually pay to their inferiors. The good folks will pardon a hundred acts of oppression in consideration of a bow and a smile.

But to my story. It is recorded that Queen Elizabeth, some-

time in 1556, visited Oxford, where she was royally feasted for a whole week. "The day after," says the writer of the Progress, "she took her leave, and was conducted by the heads as far as Shotover Hill, when the Earl of Leicester gave her notice, that they had accompanied her to the limits of their jurisdiction. From hence, casting her eyes back upon Oxford with all possible marks of tenderness and affection, she bade them farewell. The *Queen's countenance* had such an effect upon the diligence of this learned body, that within a few years after, it produced more shining instances of real worth, than had ever been sent abroad, at the same time, in any age whatsoever." This is one of the most marvellous effects of the *Queen's countenance* I remember; it shows how complaisant even genius and learning are, in countries where the people are brought up with a proper notion of the "divine right of kings." A mere visit to Oxford awakened all the Muses, and inspired not only learning, but "worth," in this ancient seminary of loyalty. Oxford, with all its beauties, is one of the dullerest places I ever visited; and had not the tailor given it some additional interest, I should have been heartily tired with the sameness of every thing I saw. In leaving it, I had a view of the village of Cumnor, which has lately become noted as the scene of part of the romance of *Kenilworth*. I did not visit it; the scenes described by the "Great Unknown" are not yet classical, and I do not think they ever will be.

From hence to Worcester, nothing particular occurred, and I shall reserve, till a future opportunity, my observations on what I saw, at the different places where I stopped occasionally, and spent from one to three days, in making inquiries on particular subjects. There were as usual several fine seats, and one in particular at Ditchley, where I was told were some valuable pictures; but knowing the price one must pay in money and patience for these treats, I avoided all such places. In general I may observe, that the country was not so pretty as in some other parts I have seen, and that occasionally it presented scenes of barrenness. Two spots, however, seem worthy of some little commemoration. One is the ancient town of Evesham; the other, the famous Malvern Hill, where every picturesque tourist makes a point of being enraptured. I'll not be out of fashion.

Evesham is derived, by the monkish antiquaries, from one Eaves, swineherd to the Bishop of Worcester. As bishops in those days were nearly all of them saints, which I am sorry to say is not the case at present, I presume their swineherds were men of some consequence, by their giving names to towns.

This part of England, between Oxford and Worcester, seems to have been the paradise of monks. At Abingdon they had a rich and stately monastery, whose revenue, in an age when money was probably twenty times more valuable than at present, amounted to about two thousand sterling a year. At Evesham they were lords of twenty-two towns and manors. No wonder such a church abounded in saints! The principal reason for detaining you a little at Evesham is connected, however, with a different matter. It was here that the famous Simon Mountford, Earl of Leicester, the champion of the English Barons, and the great assertor of Magna Charta, after having been virtually lord of England and its paltry king, fought his last fight, was defeated and slain. Like many other assertors of popular and aristocratic rights, in monarchies, his character has come down to us covered with imputations of ingratitude, perfidy, and ambition. But we should be cautious how we receive the relations of characters and events from the pens of historians, who wrote while the descendants of the king, whom Mountford opposed, occupied the throne of England. If historians can ever be said to be impartial, it is only when the events they record, and the characters they discuss, are so distant or obscure, that they are just as likely to err through ignorance, as their predecessors were through prejudice. There is something, at all events, about the renown of this Simon Mountford, which made an impression on me early in life; and as he took the popular side, at least the only popular side there was at that time, I do not for my part, exactly see, why he is not as good a martyr as Charles the First.

Not far from hence, I passed the site of another fat rookery of monks, who in ancient times revelled in the spoils of a score of manors and towns. The name of this place is Pershore, and from hence to Worcester is one of the pleasantest rides in the whole country. This last is one of the most lively, agreeable, not to say beautiful, cities I have ever seen out of our own country. Though one of the most ancient in England, it displays nothing, or almost nothing, of that gloomy aspect of decay, which may be observed in every other old city I have visited; where the houses look old, the people look old, and the very air we breathe seems to come out of old cellars and mildewed cloisters. I never get among these reliques of past changes, without my imagination soon becoming tinged with gloom and superstition; there is certainly something in the very style of a Gothic building that is calculated to nourish such impressions, and a ghost, a miracle, or a murder, is like a fish out of water, unless connected with this species of archi-

ecture; it was the cause, as well as the effect, of the superstitious character of those times in which it flourished.

But there is little of this about this charming city, where the girls trip along as if they were going a maying, and the men actually look as if they had something to do: it lies close by the side of the Severn, which being the largest river in England, is, of course, entitled to be described in the superlative. Accordingly, the poets, call it the "majestic," the "magnificent," "the Father of Rivers," &c., while tourists never mention it without some epithet indicative of prodigious magnitude. This prodigious river is crossed here by a bridge of five arches; it rises in Plinlimmon, in Montgomeryshire, and falls into the Bristol Channel, after an "*endless course of one hundred and thirty miles!*"

As I shall have occasion, in the course of my tours, to remark the frequent recurrence of this species of the bathos, in describing scenes of nature, permit me to make a few observations once for all. Every man, in speaking of whatever is great in his estimation, refers to some standard of comparison, formed from the result of his own individual experience. The greatest he has seen, is, to his imagination, the greatest in the world. Hence, the English tourist calls his rivers, his mountains, and his lakes, the greatest, the highest, and the most beautiful, because he knows of no other. When one of the picturesque tourists comes to the mighty Severn, he is in raptures; when he beholds the lake of *Bala*, the largest in Wales, he calls it "this immense body of water," although, as I am an authentic traveller, it is but four miles long and one broad! But, "body o'me," when he mounts to the summit of Snowdon, which is of the "prodigious height" of three thousand six hundred feet, he is unalterably convinced that he can overlook the tops of the Andes, and that the whole world lies directly under his nose. The painters of the picturesque also practise this species of imposition upon foreigners, especially us Americans, by heightening, as it is called, the effect of their pieces; that is to say, by making the waterfalls higher, the rocks more rugged, and the hills more perpendicular. When I came to view the originals of those coloured landscapes, which abound to such a degree in our parlours and print-shops at home, I did not know them. It is inconceivable, brother, how they are exaggerated in every feature of beauty and sublimity.

Far be it from me to flout these people for not having larger rivers, higher mountains, finer waterfalls, and broader lakes. They cannot help it. All I wish is to put you on your guard against the superlative style in which they speak of things, to which, in our country, we should apply some diminutive epi-



thet. Our standard of greatness is different from theirs. Our Mississippi and Missouri are alone called "mighty streams," because they course their thousands of miles, and roll a tribute to the sea greater than that of all the rivers of Britain combined. Our Lake Superior, with its hundred rivers, is alone named in the language of the superlative degree, because you could empty all the lakes of Britain into its bosom, as a drop in the bucket, without raising its surface the breadth of a hair. Some of our hills too, as the *white hills* of New Hampshire, are twice as high as the "mighty Snowdown," yet they are only called hills. This habit of speaking in the superlative has also crept into their modes of estimating their exploits, the beauties of their landscapes, the excellence of their literature, and above all, the talents of their great men. In just the same degree that they exaggerate the dimensions of natural objects to the imagination, by their inflated epithets, do they exaggerate the talents and qualifications of their great men.

At present, I must not forget this "boundless" city of Worcester, and its "magnificent" river. It is spread, as I before stated, along the Severn, which is really a pretty little river, or rather, as we should call it at home, a creek. They go so far as to say, that Worcester owes its foundation to *Constantine Chlorus*. It was burnt by Hardicanute the Dane; set fire to by Roger de Montgomery; afterwards burnt by accident; again burnt in the wars of king Stephen and Maud; in the time of Henry the Second it again underwent the same fate. From out of all these burnings Worcester rose a gay, a beautiful city; the seat of the graces in this part of England, and the town residence in winter, of many of the country gentry of these parts, who prefer it to the noise, smoke, and corruption of London. It is just large enough for all the real purposes of social enjoyment, containing, I should imagine, between fifteen and eighteen thousand persons. From these is formed one of the most agreeable, polite, and intelligent circles to be found any where; equal in polish, and superior in real politeness to the London *Beau Monde*, which is, in fact, a fantastic assemblage of coxcombs and coquettes, with now and then a fashionable poet or chemist to give it a literary or scientific air.

From Worcester I proceeded towards Hereford, it being my intention to visit some of the picturesque scenery of the Wye, and thence take the mighty Snowdown by the hair of his head. The road was one of the roughest I had yet travelled, but the country on either side abounded in fruit trees and flowers. The man who drove my vehicle assured me I might gather a rose, without being transported to Botany Bay, that paradise

of English rogues. I ventured to pluck a beautiful one over the fence, and would you believe it, brother, was neither shot by a spring gun, caught in a man-trap, nor prosecuted afterwards for trespass! This I record as the first miracle which has happened to me in this country. I confess, however, a stout, square, roughfaced damsel did start out upon me, and bawl out something, which luckily I could not understand; for I do assure you, that notwithstanding the vulgar opinion on our side of the water, the English is not the national tongue of this country. In the various counties, particularly Somerset, Yorkshire, Cumberland, and elsewhere, I give you my honour, not one in a hundred can speak the English language. Were not my servant a sort of booby, who speaks all the languages of this island, except the English, I should be quite at a loss to understand or be understood. I am often reminded by such little incidents as this of the rose, of the difference between this country and our liberal and plentiful land, in which a country gentleman or common farmer would be disgraced as a miser or a brute, who should refuse to a stranger or his neighbours his flowers or his fruit. Of the latter, indeed, no one scruples to pluck what he likes from the road side, without ever asking. Soon I came to the foot of Malvern Hill, where I halted at a neat inn at its foot, with the determined purpose of going to the uttermost top, where, as I have read in all the picturesque tours, was to be seen one of the finest prospects in England.

In my opinion, brother, the very first excellence of this fine view is, that the ascent to it is not fatiguing. Fatigue destroys the very essence and being of delight. I have often, in my own country, climbed a rugged precipice to see a fine prospect, and when I got to the top, felt as if I could lie down and die, I was so tired. But the ascent of Malvern Hill is all an easy slope, covered with velvet grass. Were it more laborious, however, it would pay well, for it is indeed a noble throne for the very king of the picturesque. The evening was a little hazy, and the atmosphere presented that soft sleepiness of hue, on which the soul, at least mine, reposes with such measureless luxury. The fields just beneath, were some of them in the sun, some in the shade, and their different tints were like the first and second of two well-tuned instruments, producing variety and harmony. Farther off, landscape faded by imperceptible gradations into less of the bright green, and more of the sky blue. The white houses were sprinkled among villages and lawns, and woody groves, whose foliage was all in soft fleeces. Among these, through the vale of Evesham, I saw two little rivers, like white ribands, waving and meandering along; and

in the distance the Welsh mountains, whose outlines could hardly be distinguished from the blue sky. On inquiring the names of these streams, I was made to comprehend by my guide, that one of them, the smallest, was the Avon. The very name of this river conjured up visions and recollections of Shakspeare, to whom it is for ever consecrated, and mingled what was alone wanting in my impressions, the charm of moral association, with all that is beautiful to the eye.

The next day I proceeded on towards Hereford, through an exuberant hop country, rich also in every other production of English husbandry, as well as in pastoral beauty and fine houses, to a tolerably miserable town, the name of which I think is Ledbury, for it is so equivocally written in my memorandum book, that I will not swear to it. The next day I arrived at a place noted in days of yore.

## LETTER VI.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

HEREFORD looks dull and is dull. There is no deception in the place; for, in approaching, it presents a heavy, flat appearance, very different from Worcester. There is little to be gleaned here, except old tales about Griffin the Welshman, Algar the Englishman, Leofgar the Bishop, and William Fitz-Osborne, with remains of English and Roman antiquities; all which is to be found in every book of travels, and all which you are as well acquainted with as myself.

The picturesque tourists come hither for the purpose of viewing the scenery and ancient remains of the river Wye, which abounds in some of the finest landscapes to be seen in this country, and they all make a point of repeating over the same things. Among the public buildings here, the Cathedral is the principal; and of all parts of a cathedral, the most interesting to me are the old tombs to be found in most of them. Here is to be seen a number of these, most of them erected in memory of bishops and ecclesiastics. Among them, however, is one representing a figure in close armour, with the hands raised in prayer, the usual fashion of the more ancient tombs. The figure had a wooden leg, whence I concluded he was some great soldier, who had lost it in the wars; but it turned out that the leg of the figure, and not that of the living knight, had been accidentally broken off, and replaced by an artist of this place. Observing a garter, the badge of the order of knights of the garter, remaining upon the leg, the artist carved another

on the wooden one, exactly like it, so that this is, beyond doubt, the best gartered knight in all England.

Hereford, although its name is quite familiar to our American ears, is but an insignificant place, containing not more than seven thousand inhabitants. As an ancient frontier town between England and Wales, it has, however, derived historical consequence, from having been overrun, plundered, taken and retaken, by Welsh and English marauding princes and border-barons. Its castle was once reputed of great strength, but there is scarcely a vestige of it remaining, although its adjacent walks along the river, being kept in good order, form a most agreeable promenade. Hereford is one of the most orthodox places in England; so much so, that when I was there, the library association in that town actually talked of making an *Auto de Fe* of Hume, Gibbon, and some other writers, who have marvellously disturbed the fat dignitaries of the church! I am not jesting, upon my word, and from this and other indications, begin to have serious doubts, whether the nineteenth century will not turn out in the end almost as enlightened as the ninth.

The first objects which, in going out of town, attracted my notice, were a dozen or two of beggars, who form a considerable feature of the picturesque in many of the English landscapes, I assure you. Having distanced these, I proceeded towards a noble old place, called *Holme Lacy*, belonging to the Duke of Norfolk, for the purpose of reconnoitring a scene, once a favourite resort of Pope. The situation is just fit for a poet: quiet, soft, and secluded, in the midst of rural beauties. It was once the property of the ancient family of Scudamore, and the last viscount was an intimate friend of the poet, who wrote a great deal in these shades. By the aid of that key which unlocks the flinty hearts of every serving-man and serving-maid in this kingdom, I was permitted to enter the grounds, and ramble about almost at pleasure. I always feel like a pilgrim visiting the shrine of a tutelary saint, in such scenes, hallowed by such associations—there is something so blameless, so pure, so spiritual, in the fame of literary genius, more especially poetical inspiration. The harp of the true poet, when tuned to virtuous feeling, is like the harp of the angels, accompanied by the song of the cherubim and seraphim.

From hence, I pursued my devious course to Ross, and crossed a steep hill, where the bold scenery of this region began to make its appearance; some distance beyond, I passed Harewood, an old seat. In the adjoining forest, is the scene of the bloody tragedy of *Elfrida*, which I refrain from harping

upon, because we have been lately so stultified with history, vamped up in romance and poetry, that no more is necessary at present. I think, however, it would be no bad subject for the "Great Unknown." Next came we to the ruins of an old castle, which I visited for no other reason, than because it was once the property of Arthur Grey, renowned for his Irish wars, but still more as the friend and benefactor of Spenser, who accompanied him to Ireland, as his secretary, and received from him a grant of three thousand acres of land there. Spenser has expressed his gratitude in a sonnet prefixed to the *Fairy Queen*. Very little of this castle now remains. It has passed from the Greys; but long after a stone or a vestige is to be seen, the spot will be remembered and known, as connected with the benefactor of this charming poet.

Leaving Wilton Castle on the right, I proceeded some distance, three or four miles perhaps, without being particularly struck with any features in the landscape. Some fishermen, catching trout in little wicker-basket boats, attracted my notice, however. When I came to Goodrich Castle, I was so struck with its venerable aspect, covered half over with green moss, that I determined once for all to invade this strong hold, and give you one single description, which is to satisfy you for the rest of your life. It is placed on a fine eminence, overlooking the river, and is surrounded by a deep trench, some fifty feet wide, as I should judge, cut out of the solid rock. The first apartment, inside the gate, is a small room to the left, with an ornamental window, and large stone chalice for holding the holy water. From hence it has been sagely concluded, that this was the chapel, of which I have not the least doubt. A mass of ruins directly opposite, with an octagon column rising out of them, indicates the ancient baronial hall, where they no doubt held mortal carousals in the time of William Marshall, Gilbert Talbot, and Harry Grey, successively possessors of the castle. A large square tower remains, flaunting amidst its decay, in moss and clambering vines, that almost make it look gay. This is said to have been built by an Irish Macbeth, a prisoner, who worked out his freedom, and that of his son, by building this enormous keep. Inside of this are mildewed, damp, and dreary walls, festooned with cobwebs, in which I observed certain old spiders that came over with William the Conqueror.

At the iron works, known by the name of Bishop's Wood, the scenery waxed more and more beautiful. At Bicknor I began to comprehend that there was some little reason for the raptures of picturesque tourists, when speaking of the river Wye. Rocks of the boldest magnitude, dressed out in ver-

ture, at every little projection or crevice, and hanging over the water, give a character of grandeur to the scenery, while the narrowness of the stream itself contributes to the sublime, by giving a comparative altitude to the precipices. You tell me you lately sailed up the Hudson River in the State of New York, and observed, how the effect of one magnificent feature of sublimity is diminished by the grandeur and immensity of another. The Palisades, as they are called, are much higher, and in every way more noble than the cliffs of the Wye; but the wideness of the Hudson takes from them more than half their effect, while the narrow channel of the Wye adds to those I am speaking of in the same or a greater proportion. This remark may be extended to almost all our scenery; the very vastness of the constituents of our landscapes diminishes the effect, not only of the different parts, but of the whole combined. I was more particularly struck with the truth of this, in viewing parts of Wales, where, owing to the proximity of objects, the narrowness of glens, and the disposition of rocks, the highest effect of sublimity was produced by objects comparatively diminutive.

Among the wonders of this region are Tintern Abbey, Chepstowe Castle, and Piercefield, the latter, one of the most famous *show-places* in England. The abbey, to my mind, is more remarkable for the exquisite beauty and finish of its remaining parts, than for its situation, which is low, and does not command a view of the river, except from above. It is also surrounded by cottages, inhabited by workmen belonging to neighbouring iron works, the din of whose hammers disturbs, of an evening, the repose of the scene. But the inside is indescribably fine, and cannot be done justice to by any other medium than that of actual inspection. All I shall say is, that as a mere ruin, it exceeds any thing I have seen since, or ever saw before. Its history is not particularly interesting. It was, according to the fashion of the age, endowed by various benefactions in the elder times, from pious or profligate noblemen, who made their peace with heaven by enriching the church: and when the fashion changed, it was suppressed and deprived of its revenues, which were shared again among the nobility, from whose munificence or fears they were first obtained. It is now, if I recollect right, the property of the Duke of Beaufort, who takes pains to prevent its further decay.

The scenery in the neighbourhood of Chepstowe Castle is equal to any on the Wye. A bridge, which, whether handsome or not, is always a good object in a landscape, crosses near it, below which, on the opposite side, is a range of cliffs

rising directly out of the water, on whose sides the ivy and the moss luxuriate, and over whose top the verdure nods. But I must try and elevate myself to the proper degree of picturesque sublimity, and talk a little like a traveller on this momentous occasion. Advancing then towards the battlements (I beg pardon, massive battlements), and sky-aspiring turrets of this adamantine work of ages, I was struck dumb by the view of a grand entrance, personifying the repulsive gloom, feudal reserve, and frantic ferocity of the times, in which its everlasting walls, which are now almost decayed, were reared. The very knocker was warlike, being nothing more than a cannon ball suspended by a vast chain, with which I ordered my man to "knock me here at the gate." He did so, and the very walls, not only of the castle, but the river on which it stands, trembled at the sound. The warder of the castle did not make his appearance, nor did any whylome eftsoons peep over the wall, with his cross-bow levelled, and demand our business; but an exceedingly decrepid, wrinkled, and withal, ugly old woman, did, after some unreasonable delay, open the gate for our admittance, upon receiving a piece of that, which melts stone walls and stony hearts in this country. The professor of English tongues looked rather shy; for he came from a shire where the witches grew, and privately assured me, that this old woman had all the marks about her.

Having already described one castle, I hold myself exonerated from describing any more; for, after all, no words can give any idea, except a false one, of visible objects, for which our senses have acquired no standard. I will only mention, that here, in a large round tower of the ancient citadel, Henry Martin, one of King Charles's judges, was confined thirty years, and here he died. There is probably no set of men, whose memory has been treated with more injustice, or who suffered more unrelenting persecution, than these high-souled republicans. On the accession of Charles the Second, they were hunted through England, Switzerland, and all parts of Europe—nay, in our new world, where three of them, Whalley, Dixwell, and Goffe, found a refuge, and remained secreted for half the life of man. There is, perhaps, no instance on record, of a secret intrusted to so many persons, so dangerous to keep, and for the disclosure of which there were so many temptations of danger and interest, being kept so long and with such inflexible faith. Yet not one betrayed them. They were in New Haven when the king's officers were searching every house; nay, they were in the very house they searched; yet such was the cool discretion and inflexible faith of the people, that they escaped discovery. They lived

many years at Hadley, died there, and two of them were buried in the Church-yard at New Haven, without its being known to a single person who ever betrayed the secret, till it was no longer of consequence to the safety of any human being. The truth is, that the sentiment of the people of New England sanctioned their condemnation of the king, and the hearts of the colonists were with those bold, inflexible patriots, who dared to punish a tyrant for making war against his people. I have often, when at Yale, seen the graves of Dixwell and Whalley, each designated by a stone, which, humble as it is, is calculated to retain their initials, and the time of their decease, for ages. It is a hard, red, primitive stone, very thick, and pointed at the top, in such a way as to form nearly the two sides of a triangle. They lie close together, at the west end of the old Presbyterian Church, where I hope they will remain for ever undisturbed. They were the judges of kings; and, although they escaped a violent death, their latter life was one long series of exile, danger, seclusion, and oblivion. Henry Martin was another of these, and was spared only for perpetual imprisonment. Mr. Southey wrote some exceedingly blank verse on the occasion upon the walls of Chepstowe.

Piercefield owes its celebrated improvements to Valentine Morris, of St. Vincents, in the West Indies, who wrecked his fortune upon these rocks, and, as usual, was obliged to sell what had cost him a vast sum, the fruits of which he never enjoyed. A Mr. Smith purchased it, but got tired, as every man does, of such expensive playthings, and sold it to Colonel Wood, who, covered with the spoils of India, also spent vast sums upon these rocks for other people to enjoy, which was very good of him. He got tired too, and sold it to a Mr. Wells, who I believe still holds out, but will not probably do so very long. There are, it seems, certain days in which only the *show-place* is opened, and the day I applied for admittance happened not to be one of these.

My next excursion was to the city of Gloucester, situated on the "noble Severn," which, notwithstanding its dignity, is here only navigable for smaller vessels. It is one of the principal cities of this part of England. I found an air of business here, very different from Hereford, and in fact it is a place of considerable trade in pins, &c. by means of the river, which is divided into two channels here. But the great wonder of the place, and that which most attracted my attention, is the cathedral, which is one of the finest in this country. Its lofty tower, and transparent pinnacles, ornamented with beautiful fret-work—the majestic roof, and Gothic ornaments of the choir, with the old Saxon pillars, and arches support-



ing the aisle—in short, the singular, yet not unharmonious combination of different ages of architecture, all contributed to engage my wonder. It was begun, as antiquaries have decided, about the latter end of the tenth century, and not completed, as it now stands, till more than four hundred years afterwards. It therefore exhibits a curious, as well as complete exemplification of the variations and progress of church-architecture in England. It would fill a book to describe all the various portions of this building, and even then, without drawings, the impression would be altogether indistinct. There are several very ancient tombs; among others, that of Edward the Second, which is very singular as well as striking. His effigies exhibit him with cropped hair and beard, whence we may conclude, this was the fashion of the time.

This, and many other vast edifices of a similar kind, form one among the many boasts of the people of this country. They certainly add both dignity and splendour to the cities where they are situated; and the stranger, while contemplating them with awe and admiration, is apt to forget what an expense of human labour was here applied to purposes of church vanity; what vast sums of money were taken from the poor people, to rear those ostentatious monuments of the power and pride of churchmen. They were built in ages when probably one-third of the wealth of the kingdom flowed into the treasury of the church; when kings trembled at the frown of a mitred minion of the pope; and the people were the beasts of burden that laboured for them all. When we reflect that the labours of millions, the wealth of kingdoms, were thus invested in a dead capital, that yields nothing to the state, and how many hundred thousand people are, at this moment, suffering for the common necessities of life, it is difficult to resist the impression, that it would add to the happiness of mankind, if the incalculable sums lavished on these temples of human vanity, could be made to return to the children of those whose fathers paid the price. Nothing could be lost on the score of religion, since these immense structures are not in the least calculated for sermons, which cannot be heard through their interminable aisles.

## LETTER VII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

AT Gloucester I received some information which induced me to alter my original design of penetrating into Wales from that quarter, and determined me to proceed to Shrewsbury,

VOYAGES and TRAVELS, No. XLV. Vol. VIII. G

thence into North Wales. I was told I might in this way have an opportunity of seeing one of the finest parts of the country. As it was of little consequence to me which way I entered into Wales, I accordingly proceeded towards Shrewsbury, by the vale of Evesham, and another beautiful vale extending to the foot of Coteswold Hills. Crossing another hill, which separates the two valleys, I had a noble prospect of the cities of Gloucester and Worcester, with almost countless villas and villages, in the midst of a rich assemblage of natural beauty. At the foot of this hill is the ancient Evesham, which lies on the river Avon, out of which I drank to the memory of Shakespeare. But what was rather extraordinary, I found very little inspiration therefrom.

Somewhere about two centuries ago, Coteswold Hill was famed for certain annual sports, called Dover's Olympics, of which Anthony Wood gives the following account :

" These games were begun and continued at a certain time in the year, for forty years, by one Robert Dover, an attorney of Benton-on-the-Heath, in Warwickshire, son of John Dover of Norfolk ; who being full of activity, and of a generous, free, and public spirit, did, with leave of James the First, select a place on Coteswold Hills, in Gloucestershire, whereon these games should be acted. Endimion Porter, Esq. a native of that county, and a servant of that King, a person also of a most generous spirit, did, to encourage Dover, give him some of the King's old clothes, with a hat, and feather, and ruff, purposely to grace him, and consequently the solemnity. Dover was constantly there in person, well mounted and accoutred, and was the chief director and manager of those games, frequented by the nobility and gentry, (some of whom came sixty miles to see them) *even till the rascally rebellion was begun by the Presbyterians ; which gave a stop to their proceedings, and spoiled all that was generous or ingenious elsewhere.*" These games were celebrated in verses by Ben Jonson, Drayton, Randolph, Marmyon, Heywood, and many other wits of the day. Their poems, it is said, were collected and published, with a picture of Dover on horseback, superintending the games : the book, I believe, is not extant.

We now advanced into Warwickshire, famous for its valiant champion, Guy, and a thousand times more famous for its Shakespeare, to whom the world is indebted for more pleasant hours than all the bloody triumphs of a thousand heroes have ever bestowed upon mankind. What a charming reflection it is, to think that genius has the power of giving delight, when the organization of mind and matter which produced it is dissolved for ever ! Soon we saw the spire of

Stratford church, and then the town itself, with its pretty little river. Nobody would ever have heard either of the town or the river, beyond their neighbourhood, were it not for the name of Shakespeare, who has conferred a never-dying fame upon both. Stratford is now a place of pilgrimage, like the grave of Washington, at Mount Vernon. They are worthy to be mentioned together, for one is the birth-place of the first of poets; the other, the tomb of the first of men. Our countryman, Irving, has lately given so pleasing an account of this place, and all the localities connected with the life of the poet, that I will not attempt any thing of the kind, for it would only be repeating what another has said much better.

From hence to Warwick, where every body knows there is one of the finest castles, or *show-places*, in this country. It is remarkable for some pretended reliques of the champion *Guy*, who, judging from his porridge pot, was a great hero, at least in trencher feats. You have no doubt seen views of this castle, as it is in all the picturesque works; and if you have not, it is impossible to convey any likeness in words. What amused me most was, the honest country people I occasionally conversed with, who repeated, with an air of most credulous gravity, all the enormous tales recorded of this renowned trencher-man, Sir Guy, whose legendary feats in valorous fight, and valorous eating, are all authenticated by a statue, at *Guy's Cliff*, in the neighbourhood, of most gigantic proportions.

From Warwick I passed the castle of Kenilworth, which has lately been dug out of its ruins by the indefatigable pen of the "Great Unknown." It is a fine ruin, overgrown with ivy: the comparatively modern additions of the Earl of Leicester are gone to decay, while the more ancient still subsist in tolerable preservation. Rout, and revel, and beer-drinking, bear-baiting, and other royal sports, are here succeeded by silence, decay, and desolation. These castles formed the links of that vast feudal chain which bound the people of the middle ages. They are fast disappearing from the land, and let them go: they swallowed up the cottages, and held the cottagers in bondage.

Passing some fine seats I now came in sight of Coventry, famous for Peeping Tom and ribbon weaving. It is an old city; and all the old cities I have ever seen, except Oxford, that have not been burned down two or three times at least, are, to my mind, very ugly. The streets of Coventry are narrow, inconvenient, and dirty; the houses gloomy, and the people bear the indelible marks of a manufacturing town. Soon after leaving this place, which is regularly anathematized by all picturesque tourists, the country became flat, and ap-

parently volcanic; for all around I could see the columns of black, malignant, manufacturing smoke, curling to the skies, or flattening and spreading over the landscape.

Approaching Birmingham, I breathed the very essence of coal-smoke, which lowered over the pretty, smart, new country-boxes of the manufacturers. I had passed through this town before, on my way to London, but as I was in haste to deliver my ———, made no stay here. On this occasion, however, I spent several days in viewing the manufactories, and making inquiries as to the effects of the system upon the morals, manners, and health of the people engaged in them. The general result of all my experience, observation, and inquiry I shall perhaps give you in a letter particularly devoted to the subject, which is just now of peculiar interest in our country. I found every thing at a stand here; the manufacturers dispirited; the workmen ragged, starving, and disaffected; the whole town complaining. Nothing, in fact, can present a more miserable spectacle, than a place arrested in a course of almost unparalleled prosperity, by those unaccountable mutations which turn the tide of commerce into new channels, and, while they throw thousands out of employment and bread, produce premature decay, and modern ruins. The most common appearance here, is that of beggary; the rarest, a clean face and hands.

Skirting the borders of Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and Shropshire, the country was beautiful, and some of the views highly picturesque as well as extensive. In many parts of Staffordshire especially, the appearance of innumerable furnaces gave the country at night a most singular aspect. It seemed that Mr. Hutton's subterranean fire was bursting forth in every direction, and that the whole interior of the earth was teeming with combustible matter. I had a view of the Leasowes and Hagley, two beautiful spots; the one connected with the genius, taste, and prodigality of Shenstone; the other, with the name of Lyttelton. The latter place has been fruitful in distinguished characters. Their beauties are familiar to the imagination of most general readers in our country, and so I pass them by. I visited Colebrooke Dale, which is in the way to Shrewsbury, and where Vulcan and the Cyclops resort. Every thing is iron here; there is an iron bridge; the seats are iron; and the men who sit on them are either iron or steel, I could not tell which. The eternal clink of hammers, the roaring of the forges, and the columns of thick black smoke, render this place particularly detestable to ears and eyes of common sensibility. If ever they catch me there again, I'll give them full leave, as Shakspeare says, "to hammer me into a twigger bottle."

From Colebrooke Dale, winding along the "Noble Severn," which may be about as wide as our Thames at Norwich, in Connecticut, I was highly pleased with the pretty scenery of the little basin through which the river passes. In getting to the city, however, it was necessary to mount an eminence, from whence I had a clear view of the mountains of North Wales. On the other hand, was a fine hill, called the Wrekin, rising pretty abruptly out of a great plain and richly clothed with verdure. I afterwards climbed to the top, in an excursion from Shrewsbury, and was gratified with a view that paid me for the labour, which is more than I can say of many others. I arrived at that city about five in the afternoon, crossing a second time by a grand bridge over the Severn, which almost flows round the whole hill on which Shrewsbury is built.

I had two particular objects in view, which induced me to spend three or four days at Shrewsbury: one was to see the prison, which is conducted and governed according to the system proposed by Mr. Howard, and combines with it a house of correction; the other was, to inspect the House of Industry, which is considered one of the most luxurious receptacles of idleness and beggary in this country. Having made the necessary arrangements, I accordingly first visited the prison. The area within the walls contains about two acres of ground; you enter by the porter's lodge, over the gate of which is a bust of Mr. Howard, that benevolent man and inflexible father! The ground floor on the left is occupied by the turnkey's rooms, above which are his bed-chambers; that on the right is occupied by the lazaretto, where is a hot and cold bath, an oven to fumigate clothes, which are taken from the prisoners, and a prison uniform put on them. Other rooms up stairs are appropriated to the performance of the last offices for criminals by the clergy, previously to execution on the flat roof above. The debtors, male and female, female felons, capital male felons, petty male felons, women of ill fame, and vagrants, male and female disorderly servants, and apprentices, male vagrants and deserters, are each accommodated with a spacious court, day rooms, and sleeping rooms, so that it is quite a luxury to be here. In addition to these, there are two courts for male and female refractory prisoners, together with a detached infirmary, with separate courts, day-rooms, and sleeping-rooms: in short, my dear brother, beyond all doubt, a large proportion of the prisoners here are better lodged, better fed, and better clothed, than they were at home. In fact, nine out of ten, of the people of England, do not spend as much as it costs to maintain a pauper here.

All this is pretty enough in theory, and looks very like hu-

manity ; but I dare only shake my head at it, and say nothing. If people will divert the laws from their original intention, and make that, in effect, a reward, which was intended, and ought to be, a punishment ; if they will build palaces for felons and paupers to revel in at the expense of honest industry, why nothing is to be said against humanity, which, under pretence of tenderness to the worthless and unprincipled, pardons the wretch who is only liberated to commit new crimes, or feeds and lodges him in infinite comfort at the expense of the society he has offended. Experience, not argument, must cure these indiscreet gambols of philanthropists. It will not be long before they discover, that they are only heaping coals of fire upon the heads of thousands, in the remote hope of reclaiming one, and offering premiums to vice and immorality. If Mrs. Fry will bribe women of ill fame to reformation, by supporting them comfortably, while thousands of wives and mothers, who never wallowed in scenes of corruption, but have worked their fingers to the bone, to keep themselves and their children from want, are pining in hopeless and obscure wretchedness ; let her do it, I say again. Instead of offering premiums to virtue, she is proposing temptations to vice, since it seems women must first become infamous in society, in order to entitle themselves to her notice and bounty. No wonder, my dear brother, that vice should thrive, poverty multiply, and prodigality and idleness increase here, under this new system of patronage. But the voice of warning is the voice of one crying in the wilderness ; or, if it be heard, it is only heard for the purpose of bringing the charge of inhumanity against him who uttered the warning. It is not difficult to predict the result of all these injudicious measures.

From the prison I was carried to what I supposed to be a palace, beautifully situated on a lofty bank, and overlooking one of the finest prospects imaginable. Concluding there was some mistake, I begged to be conducted to the poor house. My guide, with an air of great self-complacency, assured me this was the poor house, and that it cost, first and last, above twenty thousand pounds sterling. It is a superb building, affording such luxurious lodgings and excellent accommodations, that I was not surprised people preferred living there in idleness and luxury, to working hard at home, and faring indifferently. In looking over the books, and seeing the vast quantities of provisions, the number of fat beeves slaughtered for the entertainment of these sumptuous beggars, I no longer wondered that beggary was grown so respectable a trade. It is quite natural that the people of England should be degraded into paupers, when they are thus actually seduced into idleness,

by the tempting prospect of good living and good lodging, instead of being deterred by the certainty of want, and all its train of ills. Is this humanity, is this charity? thought I. Is it thus, that the happiness of human beings is brought about, by tempting them from labour and economy by the prospect of indulgence and plenty, at the expense of others? Is it thus that children are prepared to encounter the labours to which their birth renders them liable, by being pampered in this splendid eating-house? I put some of these questions to those about me, and never got a civil word afterwards. These people share in the good things, and grow rich on charities. It is a fine thing, brother, to manage the concerns of the poor in this country. I wish some one would have the honest hardihood to speak of these institutions as they deserve; risk the reputation of a philanthropist in the attempt to restrain the progress of idleness and beggary, and rid the industrious of the task, not only of supplying their own wants, but of pampering those of others. He might be a martyr to his honesty, but I am mistaken if posterity would not do him justice.

## LETTER VIII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

BY the advice of mine host of the Talbot, who prided himself on "serving the noble Earl of Shrewsbury," I left my horses here, and hired a couple of Welsh ponies, which, he assured me, would carry me much more safely over the mountains and through the defiles of Wales. He likewise hinted, that a Welsh pony had a sort of instinctive feeling of the picturesque, and never failed to stop where there was a fine view, so that there would be no occasion to carry a guide-book with me. I took his advice, and accordingly bestrode a pony that turned out to be broken-winded. This, however, proved in the end to be a great advantage, for whenever I dismounted to scramble up a precipice, or view a cascade in some glen, unapproachable on horseback, I was always sure of finding him exactly in the same place on my return, he being never guilty of any voluntary locomotion whatever.

Some of the picturesque hunters make their tours on foot, but I had two invincible objections to this mode. I hate walking, and should have been as long getting through Wales, as a Welsh pedigree. In the next place, I was aware, from experience, that a man on foot never gets a civil answer or civil treatment at a decent British inn. The first salute will be from the chambermaid, who, on being questioned about a bed, will

go near to snap your head off. This is particularly the case about Shrewsbury, where the women, having a little of the hot Welsh blood in them, are apt to be somewhat *shrewish*, whence, possibly, may be derived the name of this ancient city. On one occasion, in Herefordshire, I was very much amused with a respectable, though plain looking man, who came up on foot to an inn, where I had stopt to dine, and ordered dinner. Nobody invited him into the house, and he was permitted to sit on the piazza, until I was wrought upon to ask him into the room I occupied. Contrary to my expectation, for I concluded this piece of civility would make him suspect me of a design to pick his pocket, it is so uncommon in this country, he accepted the invitation very frankly, and I found him exceedingly intelligent and well-bred. To tell you the truth, I began to suspect *him*, it being so unnatural for an Englishman to be entertaining without the hope of advantage. However, no dinner came, or was likely to come, when, after a delay of an hour or two, an elegant equipage drove up to the door, preceded by an outrider, who enquired if a gentleman, whom he described, had stopped there. An explanation ensued, and I found that the carriage having received some little damage, the owner, the plain gentleman I spoke of, had taken it into his head to walk on to this hospitable inn. Never were there such civilities, such bows, such *congees*, and such enquiries, about what the gentleman would choose for dinner, and such apologies for the delay, which was all put upon the cook. The gentleman, who seemed somewhat of a sly humourist, upon this insisted upon the cook's head being well singed, and made into a stew for his dinner. This brought up the cook, who, in spite of the landlord's menacing looks, told, what was no doubt the truth, that no dinner had been ordered. The incognito then, pulling out his watch, observed that it was now too late to cook a dinner, and he would go on to the next inn to sup and sleep. The landlord was in despair, and the chambermaid almost bit off the end of her thumb, on the occasion. Previously to his departure, we exchanged addresses, and the stranger took my promise to visit him, should I ever pass his mansion, which was in a distant part of the country.

Having furnished myself with a map and portfolio, I set forth from Shrewsbury one bright morning, for the land of promise, which I had come so far to visit. Previously to this, I had brightened up my rusty genealogy, and traced my descent pretty clearly from Adam, which is considered a tolerable pedigree in Wales, though nothing to make a boast of. Blood, brother, blood is every thing here. In the words



of an old writer, which I quote because I am fairly tired of every new one,—“ You shall ever find amongst a hundred Frenchmen forty hot shots; amongst a hundred Spaniards threescore braggarts; amongst a hundred Dutchmen fourscore drunkards:—amongst a hundred Englishmen fourscore and ten madmen; and amongst a hundred Welshmen fourscore and nineteen gentlemen!” Some of the family trees there took root long before the flood. I must not omit to apprise you, that I was still accompanied by the Professor of languages, whose services as an interpreter I found necessary in crossing through some of the shires, where they speak a tongue not to be found in the German professor’s book, that enumerates six or seven thousand. To one, who in America has been accustomed to hear the commonest people speak with the fluency and almost the correctness of a gentleman, it is intolerable to listen to the *haw hawing* and *yaw yawing* of these terribly thick-headed fellows, who, with all their really good qualities, and these are many, are most stupidly deficient in ideas, and possess no language to express the few they have. I long to get among the sprightly, saucy Americans, whose tongues run like mill-tails, and whose brains are the inexhaustible reservoirs that keep the mill-clappers going.

Passing Oswestry, a neat town, I came to a small brook, called the *river* Carriac, rolling through a deep glen, and there first entered Denbighshire, the frontier county in this part of North Wales. The first object that attracted my attention, was ———— castle, belonging to one of the ————, who here, as in our country, are people of figure. From the ascent leading to this castle, there is one of the first fine views, comprehending seventeen counties, and bounded by the Wrekin, Clay Hills, and various other picturesque mountains. A servant came out to us in the park, but rather with a view to watch our motions, I believe, than to show the grounds, for he stuck right close to our heels, without pointing out any thing to notice. Being thirsty, I asked for a drink of water, but, according to the information of our spy, there was not a drop in or about this grand place.

From the castle we gained the road, which divides towards Chester on the one hand, and Llangollan on the other. The name of the latter being familiar to me, as abounding in rural beauties, I turned in that direction, and after riding about seven miles, came to the village of Llangollan, which is worth going seven miles to avoid. It is, however, useful to the lovers of the picturesque, as forming a perfect contrast with the scenery in the vicinity, which is embellished by the river Dee, and various other beautiful objects. And here, my dear bro-

ther, before I proceed another step, I must apprise you, that you are not to expect me to mention the name of every place I attempt to sketch for your amusement. The Welsh names, when spoken, are musical enough; but woe to the man, unless he be a descendant of Caractacus, who attempts to pronounce them as they are written! The easiest of them are such as Craig, Eglwyseg, Llechweddgarth, and St. Collen ap Gwynnawg ap Clydawg ap Cowdra ap Caradoy Freichfas ap Lleyr Merim ap Einion Yrth ap Cunedda Wledig! the name of one single Welsh saint, the patron of a church in this neighbourhood.

On arriving at Llangollan, I trusted to instinct for the choice of an inn, and, as ill fate would have it, came to the sign of the Open Hand, which looked like an indication of liberality. My experience, however, demonstrated to me afterwards, that this Hand was open to receive, not to bestow; and that it was a very grasping hand. The first object that attracts the eye of a stranger at Llangollan, is *Dinas Bran*, consisting of a few remains of what appears once to have been an extensive castle. Having rested myself a little, I sallied forth, book in hand, to pay it a visit. Tradition records, that as long ago as the middle of the thirteenth century, which, however, is but as yesterday in Wales, this castle afforded a refuge to Gryffid ap Madoc, Mr. Southey's hero, who discovered America, and settled a Welsh colony somewhere.

Here, too, more than a century after, lived a beautiful maid of the House of Tudor, who was beloved by an illustrious bard, whose name occurs in Gray's fine ode, as "High born Hoel." Myfanway Vechan, for that was her name, it seems was content to receive the homage of the bard, and often listened to his harp and song, which was heard at all times of the night in this charming valley. Sometimes he tuned his harp to the warlike exploits of the Tudors and the Hoels, in old times compeers in battle, and, in his prophetic inspiration, predicted that the former would one day give kings to the isle. At others he sung the joys and the pains of love: he painted the hopes of the lover as he won the smile of his mistress, his despair at her frown or indifference; the elysium of success, and the agony of disappointment. The lady listened, but she did not love; at least, she only loved his music and his poetry: her hand was destined for princes. She married a Tudor, and her descendants fulfilled the prophecy of the bard. Hoel wandered away with his harp, through the wildest and most unfrequented parts of the country, sometimes frenzied and sometimes forlorn; in his lucid hours singing the falsehood of his mistress, and his own unalterable love. One of these

songs is still extant, and, it is said, is exquisitely affecting. In one of the paroxysms of his frenzy, he foretold the subjugation of his country; and having finished, he broke his harp in the sight of some astonished peasants, and precipitated himself from a high rock into a torrent that carried him no one knew whither.

It is probable this story, which I heard, not at Llangollan, but in one of the most sequestered parts of the country I afterwards visited, suggested to Gray the fine picture of his bard plunging into "Conway's foaming flood." There are plenty of these little historical romances connected with the old ruins in different parts of Wales, and it is from such that the latter derive a great portion of their interest. The hill, on which these ruins lie, is estimated at 1800 feet high, and commands a prospect finer than that from the higher mountains, though, of course, not so extensive. In fact, every one that has had experience in these matters knows that views, bounded only by the powers of human vision, are neither so beautiful nor so gratifying as those which are circumscribed by picturesque outlines. I have often had finer views from the base of a mountain than its extreme summit, where every thing was confused and indistinct.

The whole of this vale and adjacent country is full of fine rural beauties, and abounds with interesting local associations. I wandered from the centre of the village, almost every day, for four or five days, in different directions, and every where found objects, and combinations of objects, that attracted my attention. Among others, I one day stumbled by chance upon the site of Owen Glendower's palace, which is marked by a clump of old trees growing on an eminence. Glendower, like almost every man of great abilities in those days, at least among the Welsh, was reputed by the English a magician: if Glendower escaped their snares, or gave them a defeat, they saved their credit by ascribing both one and the other to the aid of necromancy. The ignorant, in an age of ignorance, are prone to believe this, for they have in their own minds and resources nothing that can enable them to comprehend the powers of a great genius. Glendower, after baffling the arts of the English, and fighting with his neighbour, Grey of Ruthyn, about boundaries and what not, for many years, finding himself over-matched, retired into private life, and died quietly in his bed, I believe. He left three daughters, one of whom married an ancestor of that Scudamore, whose descendant I mentioned as the friend of Pope. His posterity is numerous still, and connected, in various ways, with many of the first families in Great Britain. But he is best known, and will for ever re-

main best known, as associated with the Henry Percy and the Douglas, in the imperishable works of Shakespeare. It is from that circumstance alone, that I have been induced to sketch this little biography. The name of Owen Glendower would never have been familiar to every body in our country, had it not been mentioned by the bard, who has given many passports to immortality.

Having spent several days at Llangollan, roaming and rambling about with infinite satisfaction, I returned by the way of Chirck Castle, on the road to which, I should have mentioned the famous Offa's Dyke, said to be the ancient boundary between England and Wales. It might be the boundary between two wheat fields, or vineyards, for it is sufficiently insignificant. From hence I proceeded towards the river Dee; crossed it by a bridge in a deep vale or ravine, and reconnoitred Wynnestay, which is the noble seat of Sir Watkyns Williams Wynn, and, as the talk goes, is soon to be consecrated by the presence of no less a visitor than King George. This will be matter for the Wynns to talk about as long as there is half a one left. I then turned towards Wrexham, which has nothing but a tower steeple to recommend it. From thence to Gressford; and after stopping to view a fine prospect, through Shropshire and Cheshire, crossed the Dee to the ancient and certainly very curious city of Chester, which I visited previously to continuing my picturesque tour, for the purpose of —————.

Chester is one of the most respectable old cities I have ever seen: there is an air of originality about it too, that makes it quite an object of interest. It does not appear to have much business; yet, from being the residence of many opulent families, not only natives, but from Ireland and the neighbouring Wales, it has not that intolerable air of decay and total stagnation, which I have generally observed in those ancient dozing places. The people seemed actually inclined to politeness, which was quite new to me; and there were various genteel amusements for evenings, that are always a great relief to a stranger. Nobody ever carries an umbrella here, as the covered galleries that extend all along the streets on either side, like piazzas, jutting out from the second story, afford a safe walk for foot passengers. Nevertheless, I was assured that a cunning fellow, a real John Bull, observing there was no umbrella-maker in all the city, thought to make a fortune by commencing the business. He succeeded wonderfully; for, though he failed in business, he became entitled to the privileges of pauperism, which are now beginning to be considered by the common people equivalent to a freehold. The walk on

the rampart of Chester, is a most singular and delightful promenade. In short, brother, there is more novelty in old Chester, than in many of the new towns in England. There is a cathedral, but old, and rather uninteresting. A castle too, but it is gone to decay. Let it go—they are only memorials of feudal wars and feudal slavery; and wherever they abound, one may be sure there is oppression on the one hand, and suffering on the other. They were among the strongest links in the chain of feudal slavery, and stood as monuments of the abject situation of the people, whose labour was employed at the will of the liege-lord, in erecting these strong holds, by the possession of which, he was the better enabled to keep them in subjection.

## LETTER IX.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

FROM Chester I again penetrated into Wales, passing along the borders of Flintshire, a small county, apparently pretty much divided among marshes and mountains. The old capital lies buried in a marsh along the river Dee, and Holywell is now the principal mart of this part of the country. The neighbourhood contains a great many manufactories, and is, of course, distressed and disaffected. Holywell, like all the manufacturing towns I have seen, is tinged with black smoke, and presents a disagreeable aspect. Below the town is a glen, where the manufactories are placed, on a fine stream flowing from St. Winifred's well, which, I believe, has lost all its medicinal virtues, ever since the waters were prostituted to these mechanical purposes. The mills and manufactories are principally for brass and copper; and it is hardly possible for me to describe the wretched, cadaverous, and unwholesome looks of the workmen in these metals. One might almost be tempted to conclude that the conveniences of life were too dearly purchased at the expense of such unhealthy employments. I felt grateful to Providence, that our countrymen were, as yet, permitted to exchange the fruits of labours that result in health, manliness, and virtuous independence, for the products of occupations so fatal to all these.

The famous well of St. Winifred, from whence is derived the name of Holywell, is the finest gush of water from one single source that I have ever seen. It springs at one bound from the foot of a fine rock, and in a single volume, that, at a short distance below, without any accession that I observed, turned

all the mills employed in the manufactories. The well is covered with a little venerable Gothic building, said to be an offering of gratitude from Margaret, mother of Henry the Seventh, for her recovery through the virtues of this well. The inside of the little canopy is exquisitely carved. Many votive offerings of crutches, &c. are left here by invalids of former times, in memory of their recovery to the use of their limbs, some of whose stories are perfectly miraculous. But the miracle of all miracles is the history of the saint herself. Winifred was a devout and beautiful damsel, daughter of *one* Thearth, as we say of obscure persons, and niece to St. Benno, another rather obscure person. Having obtained leave to found a church upon the possessions of her father, the saint took her under his tuition, and instructed her in religion. Crodorus, son to a very obscure king, one also who reigned in this neighbourhood, being smitten with her beauty, according to the customs of the age, attempted to violate her person. She ran towards the church for sanctuary, but was overtaken at the brow of the hill by this gallant British prince, who, enraged at his disappointment, cut off her head, which rolled down the hill to the place where the congregation were kneeling at their devotions. From the spot where it stopped, immediately gushed forth a clear and beautiful fountain; and thereupon St. Benno, taking up the head, and joining it to the body, to the surprise of all, the virgin became re-animated, nothing remaining to mark the separation but a white ring round the neck. Crodorus dropped down upon the spot where he committed the outrage; but, whether he was swallowed up by the earth, or carried away by the devil, the legend rather doubts. It is affirmed that the sides of the orifice, whence the waters issued, became all at once fringed with a green and sweet-scented moss, and the stones at the bottom tinged with the blood of the virgin. She outlived the cutting off her head about fifteen years, and, having taken the veil, died abbess of Gwytherin, in this county.

The well became famous for its sweet-scented moss, the bloody tint of the rocks, and the miraculous virtues of its waters. The sick and the pious resorted to it from all parts of the neighbourhood; and the votive crutches and barrows announce the recovery of some at least, whether by faith, or the workings of the waters, cannot be known. Of late years, however, it has not been much frequented. Industry and employment, most potent enemies to superstitious fancies, have called the attention of the people from legends and saints, while the clink of hammers, the turning of wheels, and the roaring of bellows, have all combined to banish the silent musings of

wayward imagination. Either the water, the human mind, or the human constitution, has altered, for no cures are now worked by the miraculous well of St. Winifred. The moss and the blood-tinged stones, it is true, remain, but they have ceased to excite wonder, ever since the prying curiosity of botanists discovered that the former was nothing more than the mere vulgar *jungermanius asplenoides*, and the latter the *byssus jolitifera*, a little red fibrous plant, which is common at the bottom of our pure mountain brooks. Nevertheless, it is a fine curiosity, inasmuch as it gushes forth upwards of eighty hogsheads of water a minute, which never freezes, nor ever varies in quantity, under any change of seasons. After all, my dear brother, what business have we to laugh at the credulity of our ancestors, or pride ourselves upon our disenchantment from the wonders of St. Winifred's well, while half the world is buying quack medicines, and trusting to quack doctors? I am somewhat apprehensive, that the boasted improvement, in the present age, consists pretty much in banishing old to make way for new absurdities. While the good folks of England continue their faith in the magical operation of the sinking fund, the blessings of a national debt, or Mr. Owen's plan of placing the people out at board at the expense of the nation; and while our worthy countrymen follow in the footsteps of this faith, what business, I say again, have we to laugh at the magical wonders of St. Winifred's well? If Dr. Solomon could build a palace upon the credulity of mankind, in the nineteenth century, why should we laugh at the credulity which built only a little dome to the virtues of St. Winifred's well?

I shall say nothing about the ruins of Basingworth Abbey, which I passed in my way to the famous vale of Clwydd, which you may pronounce if you can. This vale extends almost all the way to Llangollan, which, on the whole, I think it excels in beauty. It is generally about three to four miles wide, and nearly thirty in length. Throughout almost the whole length of the vale, the two little rivers Clwydd and Elwy meander in curving parallels, sometimes appearing as if they would unite their waters, then capriciously separating wide apart, as if they had brawled themselves into a quarrel. Thus they coquette with each other through the vale, exhibiting a thousand little meandering curves, and adding every beauty that can be added, to rich cultivated fields, pleasant villages, beautiful country-seats, and ruins associated with history, tradition, and fiction. The contrast of sterile hills and bald mountains on either side, with this scene of rural wealth, rural health, and rural innocence, is peculiarly striking.

On a distant eminence, as I passed along, I observed the town of Ruthyn, once the seat of Grey of Ruthyn, the wily neighbour and antagonist of the “d——d magician Glendower,” as Shakspeare calls him. It yet gives the title of Lord Grey of Ruthyn. The present representative, a lady, claims the right of bearing the king’s spurs at the coronation! On another high mount I saw the castle, or rather the remains of the castle of Denbigh, a most striking object, whose ruined gateway seemed trembling on the verge of the steep. Shall I tell you, my dear brother, that most of these old castles, which form such prominent features in the picturesque tours, are, in reality, most insignificant objects. Now and then indeed I met with one, as Conway Castle, for instance, which was really a noble ruin, but by far the greater portion of them are, in every respect, insignificant.

Leaving the vale of Clwydd, of whose sweet rural beauties I shall ever retain a pleasing recollection, I passed over a hilly rough ridge around the base of Penmanmoss, in doing which, I suddenly came upon a fine view of Conway Castle and town, finely backed by a range of mountains in the distance. The position of this castle, and what remains of it, is really fine, and in some measure justifies the eulogies passed upon its picturesque beauties: it is as old as the thirteenth century, and was the work of Edward the First, who put rings in the Welshmen’s noses by building strong castles. One of the Earls of Conway transported the timber, lead, and iron, to Ireland, in the way of speculation, I believe; since then it has gone to decay. It is usually rented at six shillings and eightpence paid to the king, and a dish of fish to the Marquis of Hertford. The town itself is a miserable place, abounding in beggars. Indeed, all the pleasure to be derived from a tour in these fine scenes, is in a great measure saddened by the wretched state of the people, and the fast increasing habit of begging. The pride of the Englishman, as well as of the Welshman, is gradually stooping to this degradation; nor is it any longer a disgrace to beg. In every direction I was repelled from these recesses, which ought to be, and once were, the strong holds of virtuous independence, by the sight of human beings, whose spirits were bound down by poverty, and who, instead of hiding their wants, made them a pretence for asking charity of a stranger. At Conway is the worst ferry in the United Kingdom. I waited for the ferryman till I was quite tired, and finally altering my original intention, instead of crossing the river, continued on the side where I was for several miles. It turned out well, for I thus, by mere chance, fell into the track of some of the finest views I had yet seen.



The road wound along the terrace on the bank of the river, which gradually grew narrower, merely leaving room for strips of verdant meadows between its banks and the hills, which were fringed with wood at their base. On the other side appeared a ridge of high mountains, broken with masses of rocks, and sometimes half hid by the clouds flitting along its sides; here and there brooks, rushing down the sides, or precipitating in fine little cascades, gave life and animation to this solitary scene. At the extremity of this vale is the town of Llanrwst, which must be pronounced with a twist of the mouth: here I halted with a design of getting rest and refreshment. Llanrwst is hardly worth mentioning as a town; but its situation is truly delightful, although here also the curse of inequality has showered its miseries. The principal proprietor of this part of Wales is Lord Gwydir, who is to figure in the coronation as chamberlain, in right of his wife, and will come in for a few towels, if not a wash-hand basin. He has the character of an easy landlord, and rolls in wealth, while his tenants are, a great many of them, wallowing in poverty. You may think how they live in these stagnant times, when some of them pay as high as four guineas an acre, yearly rent, for meadow land. No wonder that even in this sequestered nook they think and talk of our New World, and like the Israelites in the desert, look with longing eyes to the land of freedom, the land of individual independence, the land flowing with milk and honey. I cannot express the proud and secret transports of my heart, at hearing, as I have done in every part of England, in the crowded city, the cultivated fields, and sequestered mountains, poor people talking about our country, as a home to which they looked with longing eyes; as a refuge, which if they could only once gain, they would no longer fear the ills of poverty, or the curse of dependance. In vain is it, that hired or disappointed travellers have indulged in every species of wanton and exaggerated misrepresentation; in vain have they pictured our country, its character and its institutions, in the most uninviting colours; in vain have our newspapers conjured up yellow fevers every summer; in vain has the government tried to allure them to Canada, to the Cape of Good Hope, to Botany Bay. All that has been said of these; all that has been said of the distresses under which our country is labouring; all that truth, falsehood, and declamation have uttered, has not diminished the poor man's confidence in the advantages held out to the English emigrant. They know, that for the price of one year's rent of an acre of English land, they could purchase to themselves the right and property for ever, in half-a-dozen acres, quite as good;

they know they will hold this land free from poor-rates, tithes, and taxation, except a mere trifle of the last; and above all, they know, that the very miseries of which our mean, unmanly, and unprincipled speculators so loudly complain, would be happiness to them; vast numbers would emigrate to America had the lower and labouring classes only the means of getting there: as it is, they talk of it as an event familiar to their wishes and imaginations, and feel that sort of anxiety to get thither, which those, who are born and brought up in a happy country, feel to return to it, after a long absence, like mine.

I must not forget to mention, that mine host at Llanrwst was one of the most pompously indifferent, inattentive fellows in the world. He never knew any thing about his house, or what was in it, not he; but he was somewhat excusable, being descended in a direct line from Llewellyn ap something, Prince of Wales; in imitation of whom, he kept open house to all comers, and made them pay double.

## LETTER X.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

FROM Llanrwst I made an excursion up the vale of Conway, to where the mountains approach so near each other, that there is just room for the river to pass. All the rest of the valley was completely shut in by the curving hills. This is the neighbourhood of Snowdon, which is never spoken of except in the extreme of high-wrought superlative. Its "astounding height," 3,600 feet—its abrupt sides and fantastic heads—its "horrible beauties,"—and the "incredible velocity of its torrents," which, like most other mountain streams, are apt to run pretty fast down hill, and to tumble when they come to a perpendicular—all these, brother, are described by the picturesque travellers in such terms, that you would suppose every cascade a Niagara, and every hill a Mont Blanc or a Peak of Teneriffe. The scenery, however, in spite of all their exaggerations, which of course must necessarily diminish the effect of the reality, is very striking. The misty mountain tops, the rugged and confused masses of rocks, the occasional torrents, and the rushing of the river through the pass, together with those rugged and savage features, which almost everywhere accompany the passage of rivers through mountains, all unite to form a scene of glorious variety.

Following a wild track, I came to the ruins of an ancient castle, called Dolwyddellau, which, mounted upon a high

steep rock, formed a striking feature of this wild region. Below these ruins, and about a mile distant, is the little village of Dolwyddellan, situated in one of the most sequestered spots in the world. It consists of a few small cottages, inhabited by the simplest race, who speak no other language but the Welsh, and never, except when broken in upon by a picturesque tourist, see any new faces. They pride themselves, however, (for no people, however insignificant, can live without something to be proud of)—they pride themselves upon an old tradition, that Llewellyn was a native of their town. This I learned from my professor of languages, who, I beg you to understand, though I do not mention it, is always at my heels. I found him particularly useful here, as an interpreter, having begun to understand his English lately. I spent the night here among these rural innocents, in a thatched hut; and I do assure you, that never since I left America have I passed one more pleasantly. To the eye, the whole world was centred in this little valley. The breezy stillness of twilight, disturbed only by rural sounds, the most homely of which (such is the charm of association), sounded musically sweet, lulled me into a train of reflections, that centred at last in home. The calling of the cows; the voices of the women and children talking or singing; even the squeaking of the pigs, were all harmonious to the scene and the hour. The moon by and by rose, and hovering along the tops of the mountains, divided the little valley into spots of light and shade, beautifully contrasted, yet harmoniously blending with each other. All was peace, serenity, and confidence. For the first time in England, among strangers, I was received without inquiry or suspicion, and nothing could exceed the simple reliance with which they placed their house, and all it afforded, at my command. True, they had nothing to lose worth taking; yet still it was a rare and pleasing trait of character, and as such I have remembered it, and shall do so as long as I live.

Their mode of living in this little village, and indeed throughout all this sequestered region, is such, as our beef, ham, and turkey-eating villains at home, would call starvation. They would not even put up with it in the poor house or state prison. The cow and the goat furnish them with most of their food, and it is very seldom they get a meal of flesh among them. Yet they are far happier than most of the lower English peasantry, and a hundred times happier than a large portion of the labouring manufacturers. Their wants are few, and their habits are virtuous. Labour is there combined with health, wholesome, though simple food, and pure elastic air. In a word, they are apparently happy in their situation, what-

ever estimate others may form of it, and that is quite enough for them. I met here but with one family, the one where I slept, who talked of going to America when they could get there. Through the medium of the professor, I told them of the old Welsh woman and her husband, who kept your dairy and garden; and when assured that these ate as much fresh meat as they liked, morning, noon, and night, they cast up their eyes, and clapped their hands in utter astonishment. When I also made them comprehend, that this good couple had saved money enough, in a few years, to buy a hundred and fifty acres of land for themselves and their children, to have and to hold for ever, without lords, rents, tithes, or taxes, they almost shed tears, and for the first time seemed sensible that something was wanting to their happiness. I almost reproached myself for what I had done. On going away I gave the father your address; and as God shall prosper you, my brother, should they ever find their way to your door, I would have you recollect that they treated me kindly in the mountains of Wales.

From Dolwyddellan, I went, through a succession of interesting scenery, to the little village of Aber, which is a good place to halt at, for the purpose of ascending Penmanmuir. From this village I explored a little glen, deep and romantic, which leads to a famous fall, called *Maes-y-Gair*, or *Rhrydr Mawr*, I cannot say which, as my note is rather obscure. Here, to use the proper elevation of language, which all the tourists indulge, whenever they want to make a mountain of a molehill—here, the water, a small brook, rushing with indescribable velocity, foams and dashes over a tremendous slate rock, fifty feet high! I made a drawing of this, and some other great falls, with a scrupulous regard to the size and dimensions of objects, which I send with this letter. From these, which I assure you, are rather heightened than otherwise, you will perceive, how we in America are misled by the high-sounding superlative of tourists, and the unjustifiable hyperbole of picturesque pencils. The *Rhrydr Mawr* is what we call a pretty little cascade at home. During a dry season, I am told, it is apt to disappear entirely. The winter is the best time for visiting them, only nobody can get there in that season.

Near the village of Aber once stood a castle or palace of Llewellyn ap Gryffyd, Prince of Wales. Tradition has preserved the following tale connected with these ruins. At the siege of some place, Llewellyn took prisoner an English baron, of the name of *William de Breos*, or *de Bruce*, whom he carried home, and treated with great hospitality, insomuch, that a strong friendship grew up between them. Llewellyn's wife,

Joan Plantagenet, daughter of King John, from pitying the captive knight, who was said to be very accomplished and beautiful, realized the affinity between compassion and love, and finally carried on a clandestine intercourse with De Breos. The English knight was afterwards set free, but before Llewellyn had discovered the wrong he had done him. When, however, it came to his knowledge not long afterwards, he invited De Breos to pay him a visit, threw him into a dungeon, and afterwards hanged him at a short distance from the castle upon a little knoll, full in sight. He then drew Joan to the window, and in the words of the legend—

“Lovely Princess,” said Llewellyn,  
“What will you give to see your William?”  
“Wales and England and Llewellyn,”  
“I’d freely give to see my William.”

Llewellyn, as might be expected, irritated at this answer, pointed out, with horrible satisfaction, the body of De Breos, hanging full in view. The lady did not expire at the sight, but lived several years afterwards with her husband, who, it seems, was satisfied with his revenge upon the lover. You must excuse me for troubling you with this stuff; but the fact is, there is little else to be told about these old castles, but tales of unprincipled love and outrageous revenge.

Nothing occurred worthy of record between Aber and Caernarvon, whither I next bent my way. This last is one of the finest towns in North Wales. It is surrounded by walls, which, together with the castle, were more entire than any I had observed in this country. The castle was built by Edward the First, and is admirably situated for “curbing the Welsh,” as the phrase then was. In one of the small dark rooms was born Edward the Second, in consequence of the Queen being taken there to give the Welshmen a native Prince. He did them very little honour by his birth, for he was, beyond doubt, one of the most weak and worthless monarchs that ever reigned in England. The views of, and from this castle, are highly picturesque and beautiful; and its preservation, for more than five hundred years, gives it a degree of sublimity approaching to the idea of perpetual duration.

Near to Caernarvon are the remains of the ancient Segontium, a Roman station; and parts of a Roman road are still to be traced in the vicinity. The road to Beddgelert passes through it. There are also the vestiges of a Roman fort, consisting of walls of great thickness, and perhaps ten feet high. Here I had the satisfaction of seeing, that the Romans built stone walls in Wales exactly as we do in America, and as they

did in Italy, by laying one stone upon another. You see, brother, one learns something by travelling. It is said, however, that they used boiling water for cement, which is, undoubtedly, one great reason of the durability of their works. The mortar, being thus in a sort of liquid state, insinuated itself into every vacancy between the stones, and formed a solid wall. In the walls of this fort are a number of round holes, about three inches in diameter, and passing quite through. These holes have puzzled the antiquaries very much, and given occasion to various conjectures. If it might be permitted me to make a yankee *guess*, I would say, they were left there to look through, as occasion required, at the enemy, or any thing else. From the eminences in the neighbourhood of Caernarvon, are seen the Isle of Anglesea, and a great variety of mountain peaks ranged along for a considerable distance. The view of Anglesea was quite inviting, and almost tempted me to cross the ferry. Other considerations, however, prevented me, and I passed into what is called, by the picturesque tourists, the wonders of Snowdonia. The mention of this mountain reminds me of an omission, in not telling you, that from Conway I ascended to the summit of *Penmanmuir*, which rises fourteen hundred feet, almost perpendicular, from the sea. It was the only place that at all realized the magnificent descriptions of the tourists, that I had yet seen in Wales. A walled road passes close around the edge of this tremendous ocean barrier; and the boundless prospect, as well as the sublime precipice, caused a glowing fluttering of the heart, partaking of elevation and apprehension combined. This place is all simplicity and sublimity. There are but three ingredients, all purely grand—the sky, the ocean, and the tremendous precipice. It is beyond doubt the noblest spot in all England, and makes an impression never to be forgotten.

I contented myself with viewing Snowdon from Beddgelert, from whence it makes rather a striking appearance, presenting a high peak, generally, however, encircled with vapours. Indeed, this is the region of humidity; and nine times in ten a traveller ascending the mountain gets wet in going up, and when he gains the summit, can see nothing but a Welsh mist, equal in obscurity to a genuine Welsh pedigree. I therefore turned my back on Snowdon, who very modestly retired behind his veil of vapours, and did not appear again the whole day. This region, which is called Snowdonia, is composed of subsidiary hills, lying about the base of Snowdon, and constituting properly the different steps in the ascent to that mountain, although there are valleys between. It is a wild and dreary region, with scarcely a vestige of agriculture, and pre-

senting nothing but the most. harsh and savage features of nature. But I must caution you once more against the superlative phraseology of the tourists, when speaking of these places. They set out from London, where perhaps they have lived all their lives, without seeing a hill higher than Hampstead or Highgate, or any object of nature more sublime than the Thames and Rosamond's Pond, and coming into Wales, are fully assured that every thing they behold is on a scale of immensity, because it exceeds all they have ever seen before. I assure you, brother, I have not half the opinion of Welsh scenery that I had, when reading tours and looking at pictures of Llangollan, &c. by your fire-side in America. The mountains of Switzerland present objects on a far greater scale; and nothing I have yet seen, in England or Wales, can rival the scenery of the Rhine and its neighbourhood for sublimity and beauty combined. All England can produce nothing to compare with the *Rhinegau*, any more than all England can produce such wine.

Still you are not to understand me to mean, that the Welsh scenery is not very pretty, very respectable indeed, in point of variety at least. By one, who has never been out of England, it will undoubtedly be considered wonderful and unequalled. It is under this impression that the tourists have deceived themselves and their readers, by adopting the superlative, when they should modestly have confined themselves to the positive, and not even ventured upon the comparative. Excepting the pass of *Penmanmuir*, the higher class of sublimity is no where to be seen in Wales. For my part, it was neither the mountains, the rivers, the cataracts, nor the magnitude, indeed, of any particular feature of nature that struck me. It was the beautiful, romantic, and solitary little vales, deeply embosomed in the mountains—the softer and more latent beauties, that caught my heart, and awakened the rural feeling in its highest state. Such scenery abounds in Wales, and to those who have a taste for it, few countries present more frequent or more entire gratification.

The view of the vale of Festiniog, on emerging from the defiles among the ruins and rugged tributaries of Snowdon, was of this character, and carried with it also the charm of novelty, as well as the sight of a comfortable looking little inn, to a weary and hungry traveller. This last is a prospect in which all true lovers of the picturesque delight.

## LETTER XI.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

THE vale of Festiniog or Maentwrog is well cultivated, and abounds in rural beauties, the very seat of musing and tranquillity. It is all wild mountains without, and all gentleness within. The little village of Festiniog lies somewhat elevated above the surrounding fields, and at the foot of the mountains. Near it are the pretty falls of Cynfael, separated by a distance of about half a quarter of a mile, and the principal pitch about forty feet high. Below this, the water, being confined in a narrow pass of rocks, rushes along with considerable velocity, exhibiting altogether a picturesque and romantic spectacle. There is a singular rock rising out of the bed of the river like a column, and is called Hugh Lloyd's pulpit.

This little vale, which is only about three miles long, and a mile wide, is intersected by a rivulet, called the river Dwyrid, on either side skirted with meadows, succeeded by cultivated fields along the sides of the hills, which, in many places, are covered with wood. At either end are high mountains, shutting out this little sequestered spot from all but the skies. The tide, at the bottom of the vale, flows in from the sea, which is just distinguished through the opening, as you pass between the mountains. It is indeed a beautiful scene; presenting, on every side, a combination of objects, associated with all that is gay, innocent, and happy, in the lot of man. I must not omit to mention that there is an inn here, called *Tan-y-Bwlch*, which is reprobated by all the picturesque travellers, and particularly those who journeyed on foot. Each of these has had a fling at the poor host, who, like Fielding's landlady, is not really an ill-natured person, but he loves money so well, that he hates every thing like poverty. There are two ways of quieting Englishmen, particularly English landlords. One by the jingling of money, the other by the jingling of bells. Either of these will calm the roarings of the stoutest John Bull. But among all the triumphs of gold, that of winning civility from an English innkeeper, is certainly the greatest. It is conquering both nature and habit at a blow.

Passing the southern barrier of the valley, I took a farewell look at its beauties. The road now carried me for miles over mountains, which afforded views of great extent and variety, and comprehended the summit of Snowdon, which seems to have as many heads as Hydra; for one cannot look, it would seem, in any direction, without seeing Snowdon, or at least the



clouds that hide his top. Passing a miserable village, inhabited by a miserable people, I gradually descended again into a valley, abounding in wood, the road through which leads to the famous cascade of Dollymyllan, formed by a brook called the Gamlan, which foams and dashes terribly in the accounts of the tourists, but is really no more than the ordinary mountain torrents that our country presents to every traveller, who has leisure and taste to admire them.

After visiting two other little cascades, the Cayne and Mothwaye, which are really worth going a couple of miles to see, and passing through a track abounding in striking features, I gradually descended, along the rocky and almost sublime shelving bank of the Mawdoch, to Dolgelly, the poor capital of Merionethshire. There was very little here to eat, but a great deal to see; poverty, the bane of happiness, is here—I mean beggarly poverty—want. The town lies at the base of *Cader Idris*, which rises almost perpendicularly, presenting a broken rocky face, of uncommon grimness and savage majesty. It is only about twenty-eight hundred feet high; but its abruptness, and, above all, its detached position, distinct from any other range, gives it an air of great majesty. Indeed, it may be remarked, that the Welsh scenery, particularly mountains, derives most of its effect from its abrupt transitions, and the frequent occurrence of hills and rocks that are nearly perpendicular. A precipice, or very steep mountain, approaches more near to the sublime, than a mass of rocks, or a full-swelling hill of thrice their altitude. Another feature, which undoubtedly contributes to render the Welsh mountains more striking, though far less beautiful, is their general barrenness. Destitute almost entirely of trees, they present a grim and terrible aspect; and I was perpetually struck with the contrast between them and our native hills, the fine foliage of whose trees, extending quite to the summit, gives them a fleecy softness, a feathery outline, peculiar to themselves. Nothing indeed can be more enchantingly beautiful, than a view of the grey rocks, and variegated foliage of one of our mountains through the pure transparent atmosphere of an early October morning.

The fiend, who presides over the picturesque in these regions, tempted me to the ascent of *Cader Idris*. Accordingly, invited by a fine morning of most promising aspect, I proceeded to the house of an honest, but exceedingly poor publican, situated just at the point for beginning this mighty task. I chose a path gullied out by a little torrent, which, during rains, leaps from rock to rock, through a deep winding way, from the summit to the vale below, stopping, as it were, to rest after

each leap, in little transparent crystal basins, formed by its perpetual action. *Hic labor, hoc opus est*, quoth I, as I toiled and climbed upwards, the ascent growing more and more difficult as I approached the summit. Nevertheless, the anticipated prospect supported my strength, and renovated my spirits. But the picturesque d—l, or, more politely, fiend, brownie, or goblin, played me a trick after all; for, just about the time I was toiling in the ravine, the vapours were gathering at the top, and a shower of rain hailed my emerging to the light of day. I got a wet jacket, and missed a prospect of two hundred miles in circuit. Cader Idris tempted me, however, and I fell into a great shower, which not only spoiled my picturesque hunting coat, but hid all the prospect in dense mists. When I came down I took out my book to see what I might have seen, if it had pleased heaven, and was consoled to find that several tourists, besides myself, had got a wet skin in ascending the mountain, and had, like me, come down as wise as they went up.

I shook the mud from my feet, as did the trees of Orpheus from their roots, when that divine fiddler set them a dancing, and turning my back to this uncourtly, inhospitable mountain, proceeded to the junction of the Mawdoch with the Avon. The ride from Dolgelly, along one of the most extraordinary roads in Wales for art and labour, is singularly fine, presenting a bold and variegated scenery, particularly on the north. After the junction of the two rivers, the expanse of water becomes very broad, at full tide especially, when it appears like a broad lake encompassed with high and irregular mountains. At low water it looks, if the truth must be told, very like a great marsh, with a creek meandering through the mud thereof. At the outlet of this lake is Barmouth, which is frequented by the Welsh gentry for the purpose of sea-bathing. Barmouth is called the Gibraltar of Wales. It is placed on a high rock, 'tis true, but it is not Gibraltar. The town is mean, incommodious, and difficult of access, presenting, on the whole, nearly all the inconveniences which form the principal attraction of watering places.

Returning to Dolgelly, I followed the course of the Avon—not Shakespeare's Avon—through a well-cultivated region, enclosed by high hills, dividing the basins of those streams that water the two divisions of Merionethshire. This brought me at length to the great Bala, Lyn-Tegid, or Pimble-Mere, the largest lake in North Wales. It has little remarkable about it, and the greatest wonder is, that being so small, it should be the greatest in all this country. It is estimated at from four to six miles long, and one mile broad. I forgot, however—

there is a wonder about this lake. The river Dee, which rises near the head of the lake, is affirmed, by Giraldus Cambrensis, to pass quite from one end to the other, through this "immense" body of water, as it is called, without mingling its waters with those of Bala. It is quite amusing to read the accounts of terrible dangers, of inundations, and the like, which have frequently befallen the unfortunate people there, from the immense swells, occasioned by the storms, upon this immense body of water of one mile wide ! I had heard of a puddle in a storm before I came to Wales. I made an excursion round the lake, but saw nothing remarkable, except the vestiges of an overflow of the river, of which my guide gave me a terrible account, concluding with the catastrophe of ten cows that were carried away.

Leaving the little town of Bala, I reached the river Dee, and came to the little town of Corwen, remarkable for a most ferocious and gigantic likeness of the great Owen Glendower, who is the hero of every impossible feat, or miraculous appearance in this his chosen retreat. I hope, for the credit of Owen, the likeness is not a good one. There is the impression of a dagger in a stone, which he made by throwing it away in a passion. This forms part of a door-way, made on purpose for him, when he one day took it into his head, it seems, to go to church, a rare event commemorated by this door. Nobody must doubt these stories, for all Wales would rise to resent it, and the very echoes turn into growls of disapprobation. From Corwen, I again passed along the banks of the Dee, by a charming road to Llangollan, having thus returned to the spot, from whence I commenced my tour.

The peculiar characteristics, by which the Welsh were formerly distinguished, are fast wearing away. Subjugation to English rulers, and submission to English taxes, have altered their very nature, and little of the high-spirited independence of the followers of Llewellyn now remains. Excessive poverty, when it begets an abject dependence upon public or private munificence, grinds away all prominent points of character, and almost uniformly produces a sycophant. I do not say, this is true of all the middle and lower orders in Wales ; but there is enough of this to give a different aspect to the national character.

Yet there is plenty of every thing, and every thing is cheap among them. How is it then that this paradox of human misery exists in the midst of plenty ? The land they till is not their own, my brother. They have the same rent to pay when their produce is cheap, as when it is dear, and, consequently, the plenty of a surplus produce, for which there is no demand

impoverishes them. Had they no rents nor taxes to pay, this profusion would be a blessing; now it operates in the other extreme, and is actually a misfortune. Lord Liverpool, the premier, not long since acknowledged the truth of this strange doctrine, when he ascribed a great portion of the miseries of this country to the abundant harvests, bestowed by the bounty of Providence. Thus it is, that this boasted system of British wisdom has produced the paradox of want in the midst of profusion. By its incessant cobbling and tinkering, and undertaking to divert the course of nature, as well as the eternal economy of Providence, this government has wrested the blessings of heaven from their usual and ordinary effects, converting benign seasons and plenteous harvests, and all the bounties of an indulgent Benefactor, into curses and maledictions. It cannot be that this is wisdom, that so mars and murders the mercies of God, and distorts the very redundancies of the harvest into famine and misery.

Of the land-proprietors, and higher orders in Wales, and their once renowned hospitality, I can say but little. You can get a dinner and a night's lodging of them sometimes, provided you bring a letter from a great man they wish to oblige; but it is not given to you—it is given to the great man. But that noble feeling of hospitality, which springs from a liberal heart and open hand; which is bestowed, not from vanity, ostentation, or interest, but from love to our fellow-creatures; that hospitality, which you and I, and every other reputable traveller, have shared liberally in our own country, is not to be found among the gentry of Wales or England.

## LETTER XII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

BIDDING adieu to North Wales, I again found myself at Shrewsbury, where, resuming my horses, I returned by a roundabout way through Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicester, Northampton, &c. to London.

Beyond all doubt, some of the farmers in the midland counties have brought agriculture to as high perfection as it was ever before carried. The vast labour and expense, applied to small farms and parcels of land, and that too with much judgment, generally resulted in the production of the greatest crops. While these crops met with a ready sale, and at a price affording a profit, this vast application of labour and expense brought with it a return of profit, and enriched the farmer. But it is

quite natural, that when the produce no longer repays the expenditure of labour, food, tithes, and taxes, there should be no longer any spur to enterprise or exertion. The improvement of the land, the labours of cultivation, and all the refinements of agriculture, which the common farmers practised with profit, because every additional bushel of wheat brought more or less of a clear gain—all these will be abandoned by degrees, when the fruits no longer repay the toil and expense.

My practice has been to make a short stay at the villages I passed through; to wander about, and look at the people in the fields, who, by dint of seeing me three or four times, would get over their strangeness, and often converse with me freely on their affairs. It is by frequently resorting to this practice, that I gained a knowledge of the depression of agriculture and its causes. No one knows where the shoe pinches, or the cause of its pinching, so well as he that wears it; the sufferer can best tell the sources of his grief. The noble trio that have produced the ruin of the tenantry of England, are rents, tithes, and taxes.

While a brisk market, a ready sale, prompt payment, and high prices offered themselves, the tenant did not so much mind the rent he paid, or the taxes levied upon him, both which, have been gradually increasing with the creation and magnitude of paper credit, paper currency, and national expenditures. But suddenly his market is glutted, prices fall, and rents and taxes continue the same, or become higher than they were. His situation may easily be conceived without the magic spectacles of political economy; he is impoverished and ruined. The very perfection to which he brought his system of farming adds to his misfortunes, because it will not now repay him the interest of the labour and expense laid out upon it.

Under all these circumstances, you cannot wonder if the agricultural interest is in a state of great depression; that the people have no heart to labour, since neither industry nor economy can keep them from want. That must be a wretched country, where the two great virtues of the labouring class, industry and economy, cannot keep the wolf from the door. Such is the case with England. The tenantry find the produce of their fields decreasing in value, while their rents remain the same, and the taxes and poor rates are increasing. The consequence is, abject poverty among a large portion, and approaching poverty among the remainder.

I have never been among a people I pitied so much as this industrious, patriotic, abused, and deceived tenantry. No body of people on the face of the earth, or that ever were upon the face of the earth, have made such sacrifices for their coun-

try. They have patiently endured for years a system of taxation without example, and have freely given to their country all that they could spare, and more besides. They have worked, and watched, and starved for their country, and contributed to what they believed to be her safety or her glory, almost as many millions as they have given to their own comforts. They looked to the banishment of Napoleon and the re-establishment of peace, as the end of their sacrifices, and they found it but the beginning of their sufferings. They discovered, too late, that they had sacrificed their substance for a shadow, and riveted their own chains while they believed themselves breaking those of Europe.

Could they by any possibility be relieved from their burthens, and rise to a state of comparative competency, they would be, what they once were, worthy of being the ancestors of our countrymen. But such is not even to be hoped, without a revolution. The government cannot, if it would, diminish the taxes, and would not, if it could. The landlords make subscriptions and form societies for giving them charity; but they do not diminish their rents to any great extent, nor do the clergy relinquish a tittle of their tithes, either for the love of man or the love of heaven.

In comparing the situation of the manufacturing with that of the agricultural labourers, I found the balance against the former in every point of view. There is more misery, as well as vice and ignorance, among them. Their wages are actually and literally entirely insufficient to satisfy the wants of nature, where a man has a family to support. In many of the manufactories of Birmingham and Manchester, they labour only half the time, three days in the week, because there is not work for them, and this at one-third, and sometimes one-half less wages, than they received during the war. No one, that has not seen can conceive the squalid and miserable looks of these people, between the dirt and unwholesomeness of their employment, the ignorant worthlessness of their characters, and the shifts the poor creatures are obliged to resort to in order to exist. It is not to be wondered at, if in the madness of misery, and cast out as it were from a participation in the common benefits of society, they become turbulent, seditious, and dangerous. It is because they are hungry, and their children are starving, and not because they have read Thomas Paine or William Cobbett, that they are become radicals, as is the phrase of the day. Give them plenty to eat, and they will lie down as contentedly as a pig in the sty. Probably more than two-thirds of them cannot read; what absurdity then to suppose, or what hypocrisy rather to pretend to suppose, they are excited to acts of violence by books!

That you may the better understand the actual and fundamental causes of this depression in the agricultural interest, and be satisfied that poor-rates, tithes, taxes, and rents, and not a "superabundant harvest," are at the root of the evil, I will state to you some facts, which I neglected in the proper place. They will, however, come in well enough here, especially as they are entirely corroborated by testimony delivered to this very committee by agriculturists from different parts of the kingdom. In one of the counties, I was assured, that all agricultural produce had, within a given period, suffered a depression averaging thirty-five per cent. while the poor-rates in the same period had advanced seventy-five, and the taxes about seventy per cent. The poor-rates, in other counties, in many cases, amount to an assessment of from twelve to fifteen or sixteen shillings an acre per annum. In another place I was told by farmers, hard at work even in the midst of this hopeless state of things, that their actual losses upon the last year's crop amounted to as much as their whole rental. In other places, such is the depression of the tenantry, that they have not been able to pay a shilling of rent from one to two years past, and the landlords have permitted them to remain, because no others would occupy them, even on condition of paying tithes, taxes, and poor-rates, and living rent free. In other places, warrants of distress for rent have been issued to four times the number ever known before, in the same period of time; and the shopkeepers have gone so far in some cases, as to enter into combinations not to trust the farmers, from a conviction of their total inability to pay. When I asked these unfortunate people, what possible modification of things would relieve them, the answer invariably was, "*relief from tithes and taxes.*" All agreed, that it would be impossible to go on much longer, unless these were reduced at least one-third. This is impracticable without a reduction of the expenditures of the government, and the interest of the national debt. As to tithes, the clergy might be brought to relinquish these, under a discipline similar to that King John exercised upon the rich Jew. Every way, therefore, it seems to me, that any salutary, permanent change in the situation of the English tenantry is hopeless, from any voluntary reduction of their burthens either by the government or the church. They must either be content to accept from the rich that charity which is exercised at the expence of their own labours; or emigrate; or boldly demand, that they be permitted to share in the blessings of that government, for the support of which they pay so dearly.

Such is the wretched state to which Mr. Pitt's policy; his system of funding, borrowing, and wasting, has brought Old

England, the favourite of philosophy and song. All the mystery consists in relieving one class at the expence of another ; bleeding until the patient is near fainting, and then filching a smelling bottle from his neighbour's pocket, to afford him a temporary resuscitation. It is thus that the present ministry supports itself, by playing off alternately the wants of the poor against the fears of the rich ; arraying them from time to time in opposition to each other, and holding the balance of victory in its own hands. Should this income tax be laid, the consequences are pretty obvious. The landlords, who have been duped into the support of every arbitrary measure of late, and thus entirely lost the affections of the poor, will be unable to make head against ministers ; while the tenantry will very probably laugh in their sleeves, and support the very ministry they have been accustomed to denounce and revile. Had the landlords made common cause with the tenants, they could have done what they pleased ; but they were frightened at the "Spencerean system," and will ere long feel the consequences. They will have the privilege of being next devoured.

### LETTER XIII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

THAT the present age is in rapid progress to something nearly allied to fanaticism on one hand, and infidelity on the other, is, I think, pretty evident from various indications ; and it is equally clear, that the origin of this may be traced to political causes, which have in truth exercised in all ages a vast influence over religion. The kingdoms of Europe were all pretty much in the same situation. The church and state were every where combined, and mutually supported each other's prerogatives. The French Revolution, which shook these thrones, shook with them the pillars of the established churches, I mean those churches which shared with the kings and their nobility a great portion of the wealth of nations. Connected thus by the strong tie of mutual interest, it is therefore obvious, that the ancient political and the ancient ecclesiastical establishments would make common cause against the claims and rights of the people. Their mutual fears would also operate still more to cement this bond of union, and the alliance for mutual defence. The example of this alliance in France was followed by the different states of Europe, whose similarity of situation dictated the same measures, and thus happened the wonderful



coincidence of all the monarchs of that quarter, together with the princes and nobles becoming all at once extremely pious ; that is to say, so far as the support of a hierarchy was essential to their interests, and so far as the possession of piety did not carry with it the necessity of practising what they professed. In fact, there seems to have been a compromise, by which the faith of the monarch was to be accepted in lieu of all good works, except the good work of repressing those throes of misery among the nations, which sometimes came near to shake the throne and the hierarchy.

Two effects resulted from this cunning conspiracy. All those, who supported the throne and the *established church*, which last at length became synonymous with religion itself, were friends of order and religion as a matter of course. On the contrary, those who thought that causes, which have been gaining strength for centuries past, had accumulated to such a degree as to render some alterations in the old systems of governments necessary to the welfare of mankind, were stigmatized as enemies to the true faith, as hostile to religion itself. In short, despotism became order, and an established church, with exclusive privileges, religion. To question the claims of the one was treason ; of the other, infidelity.

In the natural course of things, these excellent synonymes found their way into our country. The two great parties, for and against the Revolution of France, in the United States, adopted, in a great measure, the cant which prevailed abroad, and opposed each other on the same grounds, though we had happily no privileged church nor privileged orders. Still, one party did not hesitate to stigmatize the other with being deficient in an orthodoxy, of which there was no standard among them ; while the other maintained, with a greater appearance of reason, that there was no connexion between religion itself and a church with exclusive privileges, but what was arbitrary and injurious to the best interests of piety and morality. Thus the connexion between democracy and heterodoxy became naturalized among the opposers of the French Revolution in the United States. In horrible imitation of their prototypes abroad, a vast many people became advocates and converts of that "legitimate party," which disdains an alliance with moral principles, and can reconcile a breach of the moral duties with the sincerest devotion and the truest faith. Hypocrisy, however, has generally a number of sincere followers ; and a simulated piety adopted, merely from political and interested motives, by the great, has produced, among a large portion of the lower orders, a species of fanaticism, which seems to be spreading over the face of the earth. The advocates of

political freedom, in their solicitude to avoid the imputation of being without religion, because they do not adhere to an established church, seem determined to go even beyond legitimacy in the race of fiery zeal ; so that it is probable, before long, we shall have nothing but fanatics and infidels, and that rational religion will no longer be found among the nations of Europe, or the people of the United States.

You have no doubt heard of the million of pounds sterling, appropriated some two or three years since, at the recommendation of his present majesty, who is a great example of morals and religion, for the building of one hundred new churches in and about London. This was advertised and puffed to the uttermost corners of the earth, as if the Regent had himself bestowed this million from his own privy purse. No such thing, I assure you. It was a million extra, not drawn from his own pocket, but from the pockets of the people. What rendered this appropriation still less praiseworthy, was the fact to which every man in this city can bear witness, that the episcopal churches already built are amply sufficient for all the purposes of public worship. The dissenting chapels and methodist tabernacles are indeed generally crowded ; but the places of worship belonging to the established church are, I repeat again, never filled, except on some extraordinary occasion. It is true, that the present churches in this city are not sufficient to hold the whole population of London, should they all attend public worship at one and the same time, a thing that never did nor ever can happen.

If a stranger wishes to see how the people of fashion spend their Sunday mornings, that is to say, from two till five in the afternoon, he should go to Hyde Park. Here he will see Corinthians, fine ladies, and sons of aspiring cits, galloping, galloping, galloping ; and trotting, trotting, trotting, in one eternal " never-ending and still beginning " circle, admiring themselves and envying each other. The great pleasure arising from this pretty variety of round and round, seems to be the stupid admiration of the commonalty, who stare at these great ones, and decide upon the claims of each rider, horse, and equipage. It is impossible to describe the vast variety of extravagance exhibited on these occasions, or the whimsical diversity of riders and equipages. This exhibition of vanity continues, till it is time to go home and dress for dinner, to a good appetite for which, half the lives of the young Corinthians are devoted.

To conclude : most of the superiority of this country in religion will be found to originate in newspaper advertisements and missionary magazines, speeches in parliament, and declara-

tions. If we try it by any other standard, it will be found entirely unsupported. If we look to morals as a criterion of religion, and to crimes as a test of morals, there is no foundation for this claim. If we look to other outward indications, such as a respect for public decorum; an observance of the Sabbath; a friendly regard to other nations; or a general benevolence, indicated by a habit of speaking of them with temper and decorum; a desire of preserving peace and good will with their neighbours on the continent, or the distant people of the other quarters of the globe—there is still less foundation for this boast. Her practice has never been to speak well of other nations. Her wars, for the last hundred years, have been more frequent than those of any other country. In every quarter of the globe she has warred against the human race, through the impulses of ambition and avarice. Asia, Africa, and America, can tell of her oppressions; and if she thinks she can make amends to them, or deceive the world, by sending missionaries and Bibles to pave the way for a still greater extension of trade and empire, I think she is mistaken. The veil is dropping lower and lower every day, and the physiognomy of the hypocrite becoming more visible to the eyes of the world.

## LETTER XIV.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

THOMAS PAINE, although his “Age of Reason” was answered and refuted so completely in this country, is still, though dead, an object against which the fears of this government are strongly directed. To buy and read his book is considered an overt act of disaffection, if not treason; and to sell it, subjects a bookseller to a prosecution, although he may vend the works of Tindal, Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon, Swift, Rabelais, and Voltaire, in perfect security. This the most orthodox booksellers do without scruple; and what is more, the most orthodox of the clergy and nobility buy them with as little. It is true, that Paine has treated the religion of our fathers with indecent scurrility; whereas most of those who previously attacked it, preserved an air of respect, which only made their efforts the more dangerous. This is not, however, the case with Tindal, Woolston, Swift, Rabelais, and Voltaire, whose works, as I observed before, are still vended by the trade, who, as there is no law to the contrary, settle the point of conscience quietly among themselves.

Not long ago, I alarmed the shopman of a worthy bookseller, by inquiring for a copy of Paine's works. This honest fellow has lived so much among books, that he resembles an exceedingly old edition of a man by Caxton or Wynkyn de Worde. In reply to my question, he pursed up his mouth into an excruciating vinegar expression, and assured me they never kept any such vile trash in the store. I believe I have almost lost his good opinion, for he eyes me ever since with a look of suspicion, and I begin to believe takes me for a confirmed radical.

This worthy and well-meaning man, however, on my inquiring for Voltaire and the rest, very courteously handed me a quarto of Tindal, from which he brushed the dust with an air of great devotion, being one of those excellent scholars who actually worship a great book. What I mean to infer from this toleration of other deistical works, and this inveterate persecution of Paine, is simply, that a regard to the interests of religion has nothing to do with the matter. I am no advocate or defender of Paine's theological opinions. Though I look upon him as one of the most clear and able advocates of human rights, I certainly have no respect whatever for his religion or morality. By his attacks on the Bible, he has not only meditated a great injury to the welfare and happiness of mankind here and hereafter, but he has likewise vitally injured the interests of human freedom, by affording its enemies a pretext to couple it with infidelity. Because the same writer happened to advocate the rights of man, and question the authority of the Scriptures, occasion has been taken to establish a sort of affinity between the unbeliever and the republican, which would probably never have been thought of, had it not been that the example of Paine afforded a pretext for this preposterous association. For this reason, I am apt to think him one of the worst enemies to liberty; and that, so far as his influence extends, he has actually retarded the progress of freedom more than all the efforts of the Holy Alliance.

But though the pretence set up by the ministry, the beneficed clergy, and indeed all those orthodox people here, who enjoy more than their share of the good things of this life, for persecuting Paine and his opinions, is that of religion; yet nothing is clearer to my mind, than that his political opinions are almost exclusively the objects of their apprehension and hostility. If he had only maintained the divine right of kings, I believe he might have questioned any other divine right with impunity. As it was, he afforded, by his religious, a pretext for prohibiting the circulation of his political opinions; and although his morals were quite equal, I am inclined to think, to most of the

kings and princes of this age, he left behind him a reputation which has deprived his opinions of a great portion of their weight and authority. His Age of Reason has been triumphantly refuted by men who were made bishops for their good service: yet such are the apprehensions still entertained by the good ministry and Church of England, that though his book has been thus entirely subdued, they have actually outlawed its disarmed heresies, and made it penal to print or to read "this flippant, nonsensical, and dangerous blasphemy." Nothing, my dear brother, so strongly indicates the weakness of a government as the fear of a book. It is a sign of a consumptive habit in any system, religious or political, when it shrinks from the battery of truth, much more when it is afraid even of the sapping of falsehood. When a single volume, a single newspaper, or a single individual becomes an object of royal, ministerial, noble, or clerical apprehension, it would seem to indicate, that the edifice which thus trembles at every blast, is destitute of a proper basis of truth or utility, to sustain it against reason, ridicule, or declamation.

In witnessing thus the whole force of the government applied to the suppression of a single book, one might be tempted to suppose, that Thomas Paine was the first English writer who ventured to question the authority of the Bible, and the truth of revealed religion; or, at all events, that the present king was the only pious monarch, and the present ministers the only pious ministers, this country has been blessed with since the days of lord Herbert of Cherbury. He was one of the bravest, most gallant, and accomplished persons of the seventeenth century, a courtier and scholar combined. He has written his own life with a degree of candour and openness, which seems to prove him incapable of deceit or falsehood, and from which it appears that he was somewhat spoiled by the admiration of the ladies, with whom he was a great favourite, on account of his wit, gallantry, and great personal beauty. Lord Herbert was every where celebrated for his generosity and magnanimity; nor can it be denied that he carried the point of honour to a pitch that might almost be called fantastical. He filled several offices about the court of England, and was ambassador at the court of France for some time. Here he first printed his work, "*De Veritate prout distinguitur a Revelatione.*" This tract is a vindication of natural religion, which he maintains to be in itself perfect without the aid of revelation. That he might clearly understand whether his work was agreeable to Heaven, he adopted the following method of consulting its will previous to the publication. "I took," he says, "my book '*De Veritate*' in my hand, and kneeling on my knees,

devoutly said these words, ‘O thou eternal God, author of the light that now shines on me, and giver of all inward illumination! I do beseech thee, of thy infinite goodness, to pardon a greater request than I, a sinner, ought to make. I am not satisfied enough whether I shall publish this book *De Veritate*; if it be for thy glory, I beseech thee give me some sign from Heaven; if not, I will suppress it.’ I had no sooner spoke these words, than a loud, though gentle noise came from Heaven, (for it was like nothing on earth,) which did so comfort and cheer me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign demanded.”

Thomas Hobbes was one of the most learned and scientific men of his age, and among the most acute reasoners, although entirely worsted in a mathematical controversy with the famous Dr. Wallis. He was a person of great purity and simplicity of character, and held with Socrates, that a man was bound to conform to the religion established by government. Hobbes traces religion to a fear of invisible powers, and an ignorance of second causes, which ascribes natural or accidental appearances to supernatural power. Inspiration, he affirms, is a sign of madness; the immortality of the soul, and a belief in a future state, as hearsay; and the distinction between soul and body, as a modern branch from the old root of Grecian demonology; that the truth of the scriptures rests altogether upon the decisions of councils and the will of magistrates, who are the interpreters in authority, whose dicta must be obeyed. He also maintained, that a subject might conscientiously comply with the will of his sovereign, acting as God’s vicegerent, even to the denying of Christ in words, while he cherished him in his heart. It was this courtly doctrine of the king’s supremacy, that probably procured him the patronage of King Charles, who settled a pension upon him. He also was all his lifetime patronised by the Earl of Devonshire, at whose house he died in the year 1679. Unluckily, however, he was not a democrat, and therefore affords no support to the prevailing theory of the inflexible affinity between freedom in politics and free opinions in religion.

Lord Shaftesbury was a cotemporary of Hobbes, but not, like him, an advocate for the divine right of kings, being a steady opposer of arbitrary power, although by no means a republican. He wrote the famous “Characteristics,” and was justly esteemed one of the most elegant scholars and well read persons of the age. His style of writing, though condemned by Blair, has been much admired by fine judges. Though Lord Shaftesbury, in his dialogue of “the Moralists,” most eloquently supports the doctrines of a Deity and superintending

Providence, yet he is never solicitous to hide his doubts respecting the divinity of Christ. Hence he must be classed with those, who, like Paine, have been the opponents of religion, according to the opinions of orthodox writers, although in other respects an advocate of virtue, and an enemy to arbitrary power. For this last reason, while Hobbes was pensioned, Shaftesbury lost his place of vice-admiral of Dorsetshire, and continued out of favour with queen Anne.

Bolingbroke, the cotemporary of Pope and Swift, and one of the finest English writers, imitated by Burke, and praised by all the wits of his time, also wrote against revealed religion. After the publication of his tracts, the grand jury of Westminster presented them as calculated to subvert religion, morality, and government. They have, however, continued to be publicly vended in this country ever since; and have met their antidote, as all such writings should do, not in the persecution of their author, or the proscription of his book, but in able and satisfactory refutations. Bolingbroke's opinions on religious subjects were undoubtedly known during his life, for he was not a man to keep them secret; yet he was secretary of state to queen Anne, and owed his subsequent disgrace and attainder, not to his religious, but his political opinions. His favourite doctrine was, that atheists were much less dangerous than divines. How came he to escape being burnt?

Matthew Tindal was another bold and bitter enemy to christianity, cotemporary with Bolingbroke. He was the son of a clergyman, and a doctor of laws at Oxford. He turned catholic at the instance of some Roman missionaries, but afterwards returned to the Church of England. He wrote a book called "The rights of the Christian Church vindicated," &c. which waked up the high church clergy, who would go to sleep at their fat stalls, if it were not for a blast of heterodoxy to awaken them now and then. Tindal was furiously assailed as a deist, and his publishers indicted. He afterwards published a defence of this work, which was ordered by the house of commons to be burnt by the common hangman, in the same fire with Sacheverell's sermons. Like many other men, Tindal, finding himself persecuted on suspicion of heterodoxy, was spurred on by a sense of injury, and injustice perhaps, to direct opposition. He accordingly wrote a book, called "Christianity as old as the Creation;" in which he boldly and directly maintained the broadest principles of natural religion, and denied all external revelation. But his politics, as usual, atoned for his heterodoxy; being a staunch advocate of the Hanoverian succession, he enjoyed a pension of two hundred sterling a year from George the First.

Toland, author of "Christianity not mysterious," the "Panthæisticon," and other works, was a haughty, bold spirit, exasperated by opposition into open and violent assaults on christianity. Being prosecuted in Ireland for his first work, he threw aside disguise, and afterwards came to England, where he published the others, which contain the most undisguised attacks. But though prosecuted in Ireland for the most moderate of his productions, he remained unmolested in England for the most violent of them all, and neither suffered in person nor property, although heterodox in the extreme. He was accused of dying with a blasphemous prayer in his mouth, beginning with "Omnipotens et sempiternæ Bacche," &c. But this is probably a calumny, as the prayer, according to Voltaire, was composed two centuries before, for a society of tipplers. He died with perfect composure, saying, "I am going to sleep."

Anthony Collins, author of "A Discourse on Free-thinking," "A Discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian Religion," and various other controversial works, was a man of extraordinary ability, as well as great private and public virtues; but he was one of the most dangerous enemies to orthodoxy that ever lived, not excepting David Hume, whom he resembled in many respects. Instead of being persecuted for his opinions, he successively enjoyed the most honourable public offices, such as deputy lord-lieutenant of Essex, and treasurer of that county. On his death-bed he appealed to his Maker for the purity of his intentions in all his writings. He was a friend and correspondent of Mr. Locke, who had a great regard for him, and his most bitter adversaries always treated him with respect. They thought it better, perhaps, to take the trouble of refuting him by their learning, than to resort to the more easy and expeditious method of the modern Church of England, clamour and persecution.

Thomas Woolston was a cotemporary with Collins, and mingled in the controversy with him and Dr. Clarke, who, perhaps, of all the champions of orthodoxy, was the most able, learned, and tolerant. He refuted Woolston, and interfered for his release when imprisoned for a fine which he could not pay, condemning every species of religious persecution. Woolston was, in the latter part of his life, reputed mad by his opponents, and yet, at the same time was prosecuted by the attorney-general for his heresies; for it happened, unluckily for him, that his opinions coincided with neither party, being far more extravagant than those of lord Herbert, or any of his successors. He belonged to no faction, and was persecuted by one, without being protected by the other. His moral cha-



racter was, however, without reproach; and his last words were, "This is a struggle which all men must go through, and which I bear not only patiently but willingly;" certainly neither the words of a madman nor unbeliever. Woolston was offered his freedom from prison, if he would promise to refrain from the further publication of his opinions. This he refused, and it is said that he died in jail, although from the best authorities, and the testimony of eye-witnesses, it appears that he obtained his liberty, and died peaceably at his own house. He maintained that the miracles of our Saviour were all allegorical, and attempted to explain their mystical sense. Such was the demand for his discourses against the miracles, that three editions, of ten thousand copies each, were sold by himself at his own house in a very short time.

Thomas Chubb was a person of extraordinary natural abilities, which he managed greatly to improve by study, although successively engaged as apprentice to a glover, and assistant to a tallow-chandler. His first work was published in conjunction with the celebrated Whiston, who, together with Pope and many other persons, admired his talents greatly. He was in truth, a philosopher of nature's forming. In his book, entitled "The Supremacy of the Father asserted," &c. his object was to prove the Son a being of inferior order to the Father. It engaged him, eventually, in a whole life of controversy, though he escaped legal prosecution and clerical persecution. Being charged with hostility to revealed religion, he proceeded to justify himself; and, as often happens, in the zeal to defend himself, advanced into the very errors with which he was charged; he at length came to the point, and placed the Saviour in the highest rank of teachers and moralists, such as Socrates and Confucius. He was a man of great purity and simplicity of character, and so disinterested, that he refused to accept any addition to his income, which was already equal to his wants. The famous Dr. Clarke, the two Hoadleys, the bishop and Dr. John, although they rejected and opposed his theory, bore testimony to his ability and virtues: but it must be remembered, this was before it became orthodox to take away a man's character for disagreeing in opinion. Chubb, however, like many others of his class, is now known principally through the writings of his adversaries, and has more reputation than readers.

But of all those writers who attacked religion under many masks, and in various ways, there is none who took such liberties, and broke so many severe jests as Swift, a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England. His "Tale of a Tub" is one of the bitterest satires ever written; nor do I believe any works now

extant, not even excepting those of Rabelais and Paine, so well calculated to weaken our respect and reverence for the scriptures. He possessed an admirable vein of humour, with an invention that supplied him with all sorts of incidents in which to display it; and having chosen the vehicle of a romance, has had more readers than all the preceding catalogue of writers put together. By placing the pulpit side by side with the gallows and mountebank's stage, as theatres for the display of eloquence, he did what would in preceding ages have cost him his life. Yet he escaped persecution, and was rewarded with a rich benefice. His only punishment was not obtaining an English bishopric. The matter is easily explained; he was the partisan of ministers, and the advocate of tory principles.—This merit atoned for his having soused the christian religion all over with ridicule. But I forget—he had another merit; he made the catholic more ridiculous than any other, which procured him toleration from the protestant divines.

It is not generally known, nor is it mentioned, that I recollect, by any of his biographers, that Swift borrowed the idea of his "Tale of a Tub" from an eastern story of considerable antiquity, called "The Three Rings." An old man, having three sons, leaves each one at his death a ring: they fall together by the ears about which is entitled to the handsomest. After long debates and furious contentions, they make the discovery that the three rings are all perfectly alike. The father signifies Theism, and the three sons typify Judaism, Christianity, and Mahommedanism. The three coats of Peter, Martin, and Jack, and the three rings, suggest nearly the same ideas, and the resemblance in the plans is certainly not accidental.

During the eighteenth century, England appears to have produced no other writers against orthodoxy of particular note, except Hume, Gibbon, and Thomas Paine. The preceding century had exhausted the subject in a great degree, or perhaps few persons had the hardihood to resume a controversy, which not only ensured a life of contention, but a bad name after death. David Hume, however, the most cool and philosophical of Scotsmen, published, during the last century, his "Dialogues concerning Natural Religion," and "Essays on Suicide," which last contains those principles that have called forth the abuse and reproaches of thousands who have never read them, and know not what they contain. He was certainly a most sturdy heterodoxian; and though more temperate as well as decorous in his style and manner, aimed greater blows at religion and the immortality of the soul than Paine himself. But his History of England made amends for his

scepticism, by its orthodox precepts inculcating the divine right of kings. Hume became secretary to embassies and charge des affaires; received a pension from the king; was admired and respected by the first men of the age; and finally died like Socrates, leaving behind him one of the best characters on record.

Not long after the "Essays on Suicide," appeared the celebrated "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," by Edward Gibbon. Gibbon had turned catholic when young, and was sent to a calvinist minister at Lausanne by his father, with a view of having him brought back to his mother church. The experiment was successful, and Gibbon abjured his errors. Two chapters of his great work gave offence to the ruling church here. In relating the progress of the christian religion, he ascribes much of its success to temporal influence; in short, he maintains that secondary causes had highly favoured the first establishment of the church. These chapters of Gibbon were made the pretext perhaps, for avenging the tales he has told of the profligacy of some of the early patrons of the church—the ridicule he has cast upon some of the most frivolous grounds of church divisions and ecclesiastical persecutions—and above all, the light he has thrown upon the creed of St. Athanasius. To these offences may be added the terrible liberties he has taken with the Reverend George of Cappadocia, tutelary saint of England. This worthy he proves to have been one of the most corrupt, unprincipled rogues of his time, by testimonials which are of unquestionable authority. St. George is, however, the patron of more orders of knighthood than any saint in the calendar, and figures as the tutelary of the most noble order of the garter, of which his excellent copyist, his present majesty, is grand master. He was assailed by many writers of the established church, and will descend to posterity as the enemy of true religion. But his politics were right orthodox; as a member of parliament, he voted with the ministry; as a political writer, he supported the principles of Mr. Burke in his "Reflections," and professed himself an enemy to every species of reform. Instead, therefore, of being fined, imprisoned, or outlawed, he was made a lord of trade, a profitable sinecure, and was a favourite of kings and their ministers all his life.

But it was otherwise with Thomas Paine, who was neither so profane as Tindal and Swift, nor so much of a sceptic as Hume and Collins. His "Rights of Man" rendered his "Age of Reason" unpardonable. Although the examples I have quoted, and the fact that all the other heterodox books continue to be

publicly sold, sufficiently justify the belief, that if he had abjured his politics, and supported the divine right of kings, with the same clearness and ability he did those of the people, he might have enjoyed his unbelief unmolested either by church or state. As I observed before, I have no great regard to the memory of this person, although his early writings were serviceable to our cause in the time of the revolutionary war. All that he ever wrote in favour of freedom, is insufficient to atone for the indecent and arrogant manner in which he questions the authority of Holy Writ; nor can all the clearness of his reasonings in support of human liberty, counterbalance the injury he has inflicted upon it, by giving its enemies a plausible pretext for connecting the progress of political freedom with the spreading of religious indifference, if not absolute unbelief.

In the present state of human intellect, the middling orders of people here, who see the works of those writers I have just enumerated publicly sold by the most orthodox booksellers, and publicly bought by the most orthodox people (bishops and all), naturally think they have a right to read these matters in books adapted to their taste and capacity. Like the gravedigger in Hamlet, they exclaim, "It is a shame, that great folks shall have countenance to drown or hang themselves, more than common christians." Accordingly, they claim the privilege of incurring the same risk as to the future, that their superiors so heedlessly encounter. The higher orders, on the contrary, seem to think that these books come under the class of luxuries, to which the other classes have no right to aspire. They are delicacies only calculated for the most refined palates, and must not be prostituted to the uses of the vulgar. While they do not hesitate to purchase and read the ribaldry of Rabelais and Swift, as well as the dangerous heresies of Collins and Hume, they prosecute the printers and purchasers of Paine, and sentence Mr. and Mrs. Carlile, Miss Mary Ann Carlile, and half-a-dozen more, to what, in fact, amounts to perpetual imprisonment, for selling a twopenny pamphlet. Of those guilty of these inconsistencies, what can we say, except that they must be either the greatest hypocrites on earth, or the most disinterested of human beings, since they heedlessly subject themselves to a danger which they punish others for daring to encounter? They had better be consistent, however, like the great Mæcenas of Germany, who honestly confesses his motives, and has made abundance of regulations to prohibit the introduction of Voltaire, Hume, Gibbon, and various others whose works have ever since been not only more plenty, but also more read, in the empire, than they were before. This

was just what might have been foreseen by all persons gifted with the faculty of growing wise by experience.

As an abstract proposition, nobody ever denied that prosecution had any other effect, than to render opinion more obstinate in matters of religion.

“ For conscience is a thing you know,  
Like to a mastiff dog;  
Which, if tied up, so fierce he'll grow,  
He'll bite his very clog.”

And yet, no government of modern days but our own, ever acted upon this universal experience. On the contrary, they have ever proceeded upon the supposition, that they could do what no other had ever done before, and cemented by oppression, what, if let alone, would very probably have, in a few years, crumbled to pieces.

## LETTER XV.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

MR. ———, who, in consequence of his extensive dealings with the United States, is sometimes partly civil to us Americans, amused me lately with an account of the anniversary dinner of the ——— Society, to which he is one of the subscribers, and which is honoured by having his Grace of ——— for its patron. The dinner was given at the Old London Tavern, where there is a capital cook, and the fare equal to any in the city. Indeed, Mr. ——— seemed, as I thought, rather to countenance a suspicion, that if it were not for the bond of good fellowship and good eating at these places, most of these societies would soon fall to the ground. The anniversary dinners are, he says, however, aided by the honour of an association with their Royal Highnesses, who patronize these societies by always coming to the dinners, and by the particular care always taken to record their proceedings, as well as the presence of their Royal Highnesses in the public papers. This dinner cost some three or four hundred guineas; and was so excellent, that, I am assured by Mr. ——— that the venison and iced Champagne so wrought upon several present, that they actually subscribed nearly the amount of the price of a ticket to the charitable fund. He likewise hinted, that there are not a few of these subscription-people, who thus unite charity and economy with the gratification of their appetites, and under cover of the first, escape the imputation of gluttony and hard drinking. By this you

are not to understand any imputation on the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, Lord \_\_\_\_\_, or either of the R— D—, who are extremely liberal in their attendance on the anniversary dinners. Not one of these, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ assured me, indulged in any indecorum of speech, or extravagance in drinking, on this occasion; but whether this proceeded from a habit of temperance, or an untoward accident, which took place shortly after the cloth was removed, must be left in doubt.

You will understand, my dear brother, that no mission can be sent to India, no poor people relieved, nor any poor children put to a charity school, unless there be a good dinner, and plenty of wine consumed, as a sort of modern christian libation to the goddess of charity. So universal is this practice of eating and drinking for the benefit of the souls of the Brahmins, and the bodies of the English, that it is computed the consumption at these feasts would go a considerable way in relieving the poor of the nation. In no two places, I am told, do they keep up this classical mode of making libations more piously and charitably, than at the meetings of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality, at which last they generally drink eighteen bumper toasts, to set a good example to tavern tipplers and the rising generation. In brief, nothing of this kind can be done without a good dinner, which is a *sine qua non* with the R— D— and my Lord \_\_\_\_\_, for which the latter is rather more tenacious than he was for the *sine qua non* at the treaty of Ghent. Not one of the R— D— will patronise a society that does not give a famous anniversary dinner, with plenty of iced Champagne.

You are to understand, that these dinners are not given to the poor people belonging to those institutions, but to the directors, and not unfrequently out of the charitable fund. But the grand object is gained. His \_\_\_\_\_, who is himself a pauper, supported by public bounty, gets an excellent dinner, and is complimented for eating it; the stewards and directors get their names in the newspapers, and the whole affair redounds wonderfully to the credit of their charity! Oh, but say they, our example at least is beneficial. The example of the hypocrite can never inspire others with a sincere love of virtue. On the contrary, as hypocrisy is never consistent throughout, it is much more likely to injure the cause of virtue by the frequent display of vices irreconcilable with its own pretensions. Those, who give charity with one hand, and gripe the hard earnings of the poor with the other, will more probably do harm rather than good by their example.

In conformity with this truly charitable custom, after the business had been gone through, that is to say, after nothing had been done and a vast deal said, we (I use the language of Mr. ———) sat down to one of the most enormous dinners I ever saw; the Lord Mayor's feast was nothing to it. Every body was delighted with the condescension of the duke, and the bishops sustained their ancient reputation for abstinence at dinner. His grace of ——— undertook to prove, that ignorance was the source of all crimes, but was interrupted by a candidate for one of the livings in his grace's gift with, "your grace must except the crime of forgery." The joke occasioned a smile even from Sir ———, who is a very serious man, owing to the vast many murders he hath committed *secundum artem*—but the luckless wit, in the opinion of the company, had lost all chance for the living.

Matters went on swimmingly, and all the children, including those of the ———, 'bastards and all,' were in a fair way of being well educated, when the drinking of toasts began. The first was 'the king,' which was pronounced by the waiter, who acted as toast-master, with infinite devotion, and drank with still greater, especially by his grace of ——— and the bishops. This was of course a bumper toast. A little after the toast-master bawled out 'the queen and the rest of the royal family,' at which the whole company was struck dumb, and they all stared as if the hand-writing had been seen on the wall. 'Treason' looked his ———, 'radicalism' looked his grace of ———, while poor Sir ———, I think it was, jumped up and snatched the list of toasts out of the waiter's hands, who was now suspected of being at least one of the Cato-street conspirators. The toast was there at full length, but the author and the hand-writing remain unknown even unto this day, although the Constitutional Society, aided by the Bridge-street Association, were busily employed in ferretting out the traitor, who will certainly be hanged if caught. The poor waiter has been discharged, I understand, and two government spies sent to watch his motions, so that if there be any virtue in perjury, I think he is in a fair way to the gallows.

This unlucky incident of the toast spoiled one of the finest commencements to a pleasant drinking bout I ever saw; it destroyed all harmony and confidence; each man now looked on his next neighbour as a radical, and ———, who drank the toast most loyally, were eyed with marks of jealousy and suspicion. The drinking now flagged, the company began to deal in forced laughs, and several excellent jokes had already fallen dead under the table, when his Royal Highness

thought proper to retire, and was shortly followed by the rest of the company. Owing to this untoward accident, the guests all went home sober, a thing, I am told, that has not occurred at an anniversary dinner of a charitable society here, within the memory of man. What rendered this toast so much more awkward and ill-timed, was, that it came in the very nick when the name of ————— was to have been given, and ————— had already cleared his throat, and adjusted himself for a speech, in reply to the compliment, as is customary on such occasions. He was actually on his legs, when the name of the queen knocked him fairly down on his chair, from whence he rose no more until his final departure.

I should certainly not have mentioned this ludicrous incident, or given this ludicrous turn to the whole business, had I not ample reason for doubting the sincerity of the great leaders in these institutions for curing all the wants, healing all the sores, and reforming all the vices of mankind in England, by eating anniversary dinners. But I have seen and see enough every day to convince me, that these innumerable societies for bettering the condition of the poor, are, nine out of ten, the offspring of a great and general plan of the present monopolists of all the property and patronage of this kingdom, for bringing the common people into a state of abject dependence, and thus depriving them, not only of the power, but the will, to assert their constitutional rights. In the ages of ecclesiastical tyranny, the people were reconciled to the monopoly of the church by distributions of alms from the monasteries, which converted them into idle and dissolute beggars; and now, in the age of expiring antiquated abuses in government, the same means are resorted to. The property of the country, if even tolerably distributed, would be amply sufficient to make the tenantry farmers instead of beggars; but as this is at present quite out of the question, it is thought a good stroke of policy to reconcile them to their fate, by inviting them to poor-houses, or soup-houses, to eat the miserable pittance of charity. Thus these new and increasing charities are nothing more than links in the chain, by which the people are kept in a state of degrading dependence on the rich, and taught to be grateful to the benefactor, who takes pounds from the produce of the labouring peasant in tithes and rents, and gives them pennies in charity.

Charity, however, as it would seem, is no longer the modest, unobtrusive, blessed minister, who walked forth in secret and in silence, alone and in darkness, to solace the wants of deserving sufferers. She must be treated with anniversary dinners, complimentary toasts, and puffs innumerable in the news-



papers and magazines—in short, she is become a mere political engine to enslave a whole people, by inuring them to habits of abject dependence, and making them fit only for what they will soon become.

I grant you, brother, that when I see the rich, the clergy, and the nobility liberally contributing to these societies, it seems little less than wicked to doubt their motives. Yet let me not be deterred from questioning motives and actions, directly tending to corrupt and debase mankind. Half the evils of this world are produced by the abuse or misapplication of a good thing to a bad purpose. The delicacy which shrinks from detecting hypocrisy in whatever garb, whether of charity or religion, is treason to mankind.

It is a fact which nobody, except Mr. Vansittart, can or will deny, that a great portion of the present distress, in this country, arises from taxation, rents, and tithes, combined. What then should be the great object of those who are really animated with a pure and disinterested passion for the good of their fellow-countrymen? Certainly to diminish as far as possible these burthens—to adapt the amount of rents and tithes to the present depressed state of agriculture and manufactures. They would, at least such is my humble opinion of philanthropy, large, comprehensive, practical and efficient—they would, in their capacity of legislators, resist, on all occasions, every attempt to lay any additional burthens on the people—they would use every effort within the limits of rational economy, to diminish the expenditures of government; and, if clergy or landholders, gradually relinquish a portion of tithes, and lower the rents of their poor tenants, already bowed to the earth by taxes, that eat the coats from their backs and the food from their tables.

With respect to those numerous charitable schools established of late years, they are, for the most part, intended for little else than mere means of strengthening particular sects, by bringing up the children educated by them, in the tenets of the church, under whose patronage the school happens to be placed. Thus the church of England has its schools supported by what by courtesy is called charity, but at which no child is admitted, whose parents will not consent to its being educated in the tenets and forms of this particular church. This is also the case with the dissenters, the methodists, and every other denomination, whose different charity schools are exclusively devoted to the education of religious proselytes, and, for the most part, beyond doubt, originated in the spirit of jealousy, rivalry, and esprit du corps. Within a few years past more than one plan of national education has been defeated by the

jealousy of the established church, which saw, or fancied it saw, in them, the seeds of danger to its predominating influence; and it is now well understood, that Mr. Brougham has abandoned his great scheme for rendering education general in this country by national patronage, through the opposition of the dissenters, who, it seems, with all their horrors of ignorance, had rather the people should remain ignorant, than give to the established church, and the government which is incorporated with it, the means of making proselytes through the medium of national schools. Thus you see, brother, what is really the honest truth, that charity here, as elsewhere, often covers a multitude of sins, and takes care to look sharp through religious spectacles, before she will contribute a penny.

How different is this from OUR DEAR LITTLE NEW ENGLAND; of which every man who drew his first breath there, feels the prouder, the more he sees of the rest of the world. There education is the general property of the whole people; and the poorest child of the poorest man that breathes *our* air, receives his education without feeling it as a degradation, because he has paid his little portion for this purpose to the state, and is as much entitled to the benefits of the establishment as the richest person in the country. Neither parent nor child is obliged to profess or abjure any particular creed, or to belie their consciences under the penalty of living in utter ignorance; nor does the meanest urchin ever feel the degrading consciousness, that he is beholden to the charity of strangers for the nurture of his mind. Well may our New England people boast of this distinction, which is peculiar to themselves, and long may they resist any and every attempt to prop up a particular church, or strengthen a particular sect or party by the establishment of charity schools, where the test of admission is a religious creed, and its consequences but too often a confirmed and base-born habit of perpetual dependence on charity, for what every one ought to rest upon his own exertions to supply.

This country plumes itself upon its superiority over all others in charities, and urges its pretensions with an arrogance that cannot fail of provoking a scrutiny into the motives for these boasted establishments. Those who make the greatest claims upon our admiration, must expect to be tried by motives as well as actions; and the people, who are ever boasting of their virtues, will certainly, sooner or later, be convicted of hypocrisy. I cannot easily bring my mind to comprehend the purity of that charity, which racks the industrious out of pounds, and gives away pennies to the idle and thriftless. I cannot believe in that benevolence or generosity, which gives

a trifle in alms, for the purpose of reconciling the people to its insatiable monopoly of all the rest. In short, when I see hardened profligates, who live in the daily violation of social and moral duties; inexorable landlords, who are every day distressing their tenants for rent; and inflexible parsons, who will not forego a little of their tithes, contributing at public meetings to societies for propagating morality and religion, and relieving distress, it is impossible to help taking it for granted, that the first seek to cover their debaucheries, the latter their extortions, under the sacred mantles of piety and benevolence.

## LETTER XVI.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

I USED to go often to the theatres here, until I grew tired of their abominations. The dramatic art is certainly at the lowest ebb in this country, owing to a variety of causes. The first is the indifference of the fashionable world, who, one and all, prefer to go to sleep at the Italian opera, to sitting out one of Shakspeare's best plays: the second cause, I apprehend to be the bigotry of a considerable portion of that class, which furnished a vast many spectators to the theatres. I mean the respectable middling class, many of whom will not go to the play because they are told it is immoral; and many for no other reason, than because it is no longer fashionable. It actually smacks of radicalism to go often to the theatre.

For these, and other reasons of less extensive operation, it happens, that except when a new well be-puffed actor; a well be-puffed play, by some well be-puffed author; or some monster attracts them, the theatres are but little visited by fashionable people. The drama is no longer a fashionable topic of conversation; and the man who ventured to introduce the name of Shakspeare into the best society, would, beyond doubt, be voted a great bore by the Corinthians and the young ladies of ton. The theatres are consequently in possession of the vulgar, who can relish nothing but spectacles or broad caricatures; country gentry that come to town, and are taken thither by their fashionable friends, because it is a sort of out of the way place, where their awkwardness and old-fashioned dresses cannot disgrace them; and strangers, driven thither by that desperate fiend, Ennui, a native of London, though baptized in French, who hovers night and day over this cave of spleen. These last, whatever they may think or say on the subject, can have little or no influence in correcting the taste of the town.

The result is as might be expected. The taste of the mob must be consulted, as by the mob the theatres are principally supported. Every species of monster, moral and intellectual, two-legged and four-legged, riots on the stage. Horses, dogs, cossacks, elephants, camels, and dromedaries, are the heroes of the drama, so that I have often been tempted to cry out with the excellent mayor of Quinborough,

“Give me a play without a beast, I charge you.”

These exhibitions of quadrupeds take precedence over all others, and command the most outrageous plaudits of the discriminating audience. The next in public attention is the melo-drame, where the passions are expressed by the fiddlers, and the author is saved the trouble of attending to such low matters. All he has to do is to produce striking situations, at all hazards, at every risk of probability, and in defiance of common sense. After these comes the legitimate comedy, as the excellent critics call it, which owes all its effect to a drunken Irishman or sailor, two or three non-descript and original monsters not to be found on the earth, nor in the waters under the earth; a smart hero, compounded of the opposite extremes of harem-scarem imprudence and profound sentiment, together with a sentimental young lady, always ready to make a fool of her parents. The dialogue must consist in cant phrases, gross slang, offensive double-entendre, and inflated sentiment on the part of the young lady—as also her lover, whenever he has time to be in love. A fourth class of plays, very much approved of by John Bull at present, are those not absolutely written by any body. They consist of the united labours of the scene-painters, the machinists, the scene-shifters, and the “Great Unknown,” whose works are regularly dramatised by an industrious journeyman playwright, called Nathaniel T—. They are made up of all the most striking incidents of the novel or poem, crowded as thick as hops, and jumbled together pretty much at random. The whole machinery of these farragoes is held together by the fiddlers, who, whenever the playwright is at his wit’s ends, or on the verge of absurdity or impossibility, flourish their bows, and thunder away in the very nick of time, while the lucky wight escapes under their cover to the next incongruity. The audience, which in London always goes to sleep while the music is playing, forgets what came last, and the next scene commences with all the advantages of an utter oblivion of the past. The nice taste of the mob is thus perfectly satisfied, in witnessing a quick succession of striking incidents, without the necessity of those fatiguing efforts to make them appear pro-

bable, that have thrown such obstacles in the way of many dramatic authors. The most illustrious of these domestic manufacturers of second-hand trumpery is Mr. Nathaniel T—— aforesaid, whom the “Great Unknown” calls “my friend, Mr. T——;” a proof, in my opinion, that the aforesaid Unknown is a very good-natured knight, or he would not call a man his friend who had committed so many assassinations upon his Muse. Saving this gentleman, I know of no other distinguished comic writers here at present. There are several that write excellent farces in five acts, however, which please the public taste just as well, and better, than a Sheridan or a Moliere.

Tragedy, who has certainly more lives than a cat, and has been daggered and ratsbanded at least a dozen times within the last twenty years, has lately, it is said, revived here with great splendour. Mr. Walker has written the tragedy of Wallace; Mr. Sheil, that of Damon and Pythias; Mr. Haynes, that of the Bridal Night; and Lord Byron, as distant rumour states rather obscurely, *four* new ones, only one of which is yet before the public. That I presume you have read, as I perceive it has been republished in the United States. Of the other three I know nothing; except what has leaked out from persons lately arrived from Italy. One, it is hinted, is antediluvian, another Asiatic, and the third Italian. His lordship, in addition to these, has, it is said, written his own life, besides a poem, called, I know not what, for it is only rumour as yet. He has, I should think, rather too many irons in the fire to do any one of these jobs as it ought to be done; and I fear is frittering away his genius, by lending it alternately, or, as it would seem, at one and the same time, to the most lofty and the most frivolous objects. It is stated that he intends to give his biography to “the first lyric poet of the age,” who has already sold it to Mr. John Murray for two thousand guineas. Whether this “first lyric poet of the age” be Mr. Southey, Mr. Wordsworth, or Mr. Thomas Moore, I cannot determine; for each of these has his respective admirers, aye, and critics too, who will not give up a hair’s breadth of their opinions. With respect to the two thousand guineas, I do not believe in one quarter of it; for it is one of the secrets of the excellent art of puffing here, to circulate accounts of the enormous sums paid by booksellers for their copyrights. The enlightened public, which always applies the Hudibrastic criterion, and estimates the value of a thing at what it will bring, will run after a two thousand guinea book, when they would run away from one of ten pounds. The admirers of genius here have never purchased a copy of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, since they found out he

was a republican, and sold his poem for twelve or twenty pounds.

Another of the accoucheurs, who assisted at the late new birth of a tragedy, is known to the Muses by the name of Barry Cornwall. For some unknown cause he is a great favourite of the *Edinburgh Review*, which has for some time past been preparing the way for giving him a *run* upon the town. He first published some smaller pieces of poetry, which were praised by the reviewer. He then felt the public pulse with some fragments of a tragedy, which were also praised by the reviewer. Then, after a vast deal of preliminary puffing, and appeals to public curiosity, the new tragedy of Mr. Barry Cornwall, which was to establish a new era of the drama, was acted before the discriminating mob, which constitutes a London audience. The *Literary Gazette*, and a few other *half-crown* critics, attempted to maintain its reputation; but it did not obtain a run, as was expected. It is by no means equal to our countryman Payne's tragedy of *Brutus*, which is quite as original as *Mirandola*, and, in the opinion of the best judges here, much superior to any tragedy brought out within several years past.

But the most popular of all those inspired writers, who have lately assisted at the resurrection of tragedy, is Mr. Maturin, an Irish clergyman, who is, in the region of fiction, what Counsellor Phillips is in that of law. There is certainly some of the smoke of genius in this writer, and where there is smoke, they say, there must be fire: but it seems to be a sort of clumsy, unpurposed, and indiscriminate faculty, engendered in horrors, and nestled in the same cradle with the great "raw head and bloody bones" of the nursery. It seems always labouring with some mighty godhead, and yet produces nothing but shapeless monsters. Devoted to a mere accumulation of horror upon horror, extravagance upon extravagance, his efforts seem those of the cyclop, Polyphemus, the result of energy and blindness combined. His genius appears, in fact, entirely devoted to the salutary purpose of exciting a people, like the citizens of London, the genteeler portion of whom are so used to boxing-matches, and the lower classes to executions, that their blunted sympathies can only be awakened on the stage by the most disgusting exhibitions of extravagant horrors.

Mr. Maturin always has his pockets full of daggers and ratsbane; and not content, like *Bob Acres*, with killing a man a week, murders away in every page, like a perfect Jack Ketch in tragedy. Then his characters are always insuperably melancholy or ineffably mad, without ever, on any occasion, either thinking, feeling, or expressing themselves like the people who

inhabit this humble earth. I should take it that he had made an excursion to the planet Mercury, or some other in the near neighbourhood of the sun, and there studied nature sublimated to "hissing hot," at the same time that his brain became heated to the salamander temperament. We have convulsions; murders by dagger and poison; ravings, writhings, gnashings of teeth, and extremes of all kinds, which are the mere ordinary, every-day amusements of his characters; and from beginning to end, not one of them is sufficiently cool to act like a person in his sober senses for half a minute together.

But it would appear, my dear brother, that these blustering, poisoning, daggering, and ratsbaning tragedies are not only eminently fitted for the audience, but actually seem manufactured on purpose for the actors who are to perform them. These last are eternally in a fever or a fidget, just like the author. Their muscles are always in a busy convulsive motion, and their eyes, as it were, starting out of their heads, like the honest captain in Italy, who got what he called "a d——d painted snowball in his mouth." They rage, roar, grin, and skip about like so many mad harlequins; and it is worth a great deal to see one of them fight a battle and die on the stage. The English, with all their humanity, you know are fond of boxing-matches, cock-fighting, and bull-baiting, except when they see these things abroad, when their tourists always write down their people brutes, or something equally complimentary. Nothing, therefore, except the wild beasts, delights them half so much at the play, as seeing Richard and Richmond, Macbeth and Macduff, Hotspur and Harry, fight like bull-dogs or bruisers. They appear to enjoy every imaginary thrust, pretty much in the spirit of an Indian banqueting upon the tortures of a prisoner at the stake; and they would never forgive an actor if he suffered himself to be killed like a Christian man, by the first thrust through the body. But the dying is the triumph of the art, and occasions equal satisfaction with an execution at Tyburn. The hero must not be less than a quarter of an hour about it. He must roll and tumble about the stage, like one in a fit of the choleric, and at the last pang give himself a flip-flap like a flounder, and fall flat on his back, as stiff as buckram. If he do not lie in this way, John Bull will set about demolishing the playhouse directly.

I have seen the critics convulsed with ecstasy, and the whole house in a roar of delight, at a death-scene of Roscius Kean. On receiving his first wound, he doubled himself up like a tobacco worm, and announced the accident with a broad grin. But he fell to again with most resolute courage. Anon he received another poke, which caused him to stagger

and fall upon one knee, where he delighted the audience with various displays of determined valour, grinning terribly all the while. On receiving the third push, he wheeled round, staggered, stamped, and fenced with the air like a blind game cock, until finally he received a *coup de grace*, which caused him to jump up two yards, and fall down in the most affecting manner. Now, heaven be praised! thought I, the man is dead at last. But I was out in my reckoning, for then began the cream of the affair: the rollings, the contortions, the gnashings of teeth, the bitings of the dust, the gropings about for the sword, and, finally, the great flip-flap which crowns all. I swear to you, brother, one of these first-rate actors is as hard to kill as our Missouri bears, which, it is said, are so tenacious of life, that a bullet or two through the vitals is a mere flea-bite. Now, if the result of this terrible battle were not perfectly well known to every one of the audience beforehand, at least, to a great majority of them, one might suppose, that the intense interest it excited was simply the effect of a high state of suspense and anxiety to see which of the combatants would be victorious. But they all know perfectly well, that Macduff will kill Macbeth; and Richmond, Richard; so that it can only originate in that innate love of bloodshed, which is gratified even with a mere sham battle and fictitious death.

Comic acting, like Comedy herself, is on a scale still inferior to that of tragic acting. The real fine gentleman is no more, either in real life here, or in the comedies or comedians of the present time, unless Mr. Elliston may be called an exception. In the room of those sprightly wits and courageous coxcombs, who give such charms to the elder plays, we now see a miserable specimen of a modern Corinthian, stupid as the author himself, and depending entirely for endurance on the size of his neckcloth, the enormity of his costume, and a few cant phrases, equally destitute of meaning and wit. The rest depends upon the actor, who is obliged to animate the skeleton, by every exertion of the powers of grimace and buffoonery. The broad vulgarity, mixed up with incongruous and exaggerated feeling, as its contrast, by which the comedy of the present day is characterised, is equally at war with genteel humour and sprightliness, as well as natural, unaffected sentiment. It is the exertion of an exhausted genius, fostered by a worn-out taste. The actors must, of course, accommodate themselves to the poverty of the age, and bring their powers down to the dead level of dramatic degradation. Besides, they have no heart to exert themselves, after seeing a Newfoundland dog, or an elephant, greeted with applauses on the stage, that in a better age would have only fallen to the lot of a Garrick, a Betterton, a Cibber, or an Abingdon.



It is impossible to compare the French stage with the English at this period, without being forcibly struck with the entire superiority of the *Theatre Français*, which is devoted to the preservation of the national taste, over either of the London theatres. At the former, I always found an audience, refined, decorous, quiet, and attentive. Every noise was promptly repressed by the sentiment of the house, and every indecorum immediately arrested by a burst of indignant feeling, which the most hardy insolence or determined profligacy cannot withstand. The costume of the actors, while accommodated, in the most scrupulous manner, to the age and people to which the characters appertained, was totally divested of all tinsel and glitter: the scenery and decorations were always in the most chaste and appropriate style; nor did I ever see an instance of the Birmingham brilliancy, with which Mr. Kean sometimes dazzles a London audience. The taste of the vulgar is never appealed to at the *Theatre Français*, by exhibitions of wild beasts; nor are the menageries emptied of their four-footed tenants, for the purpose of giving a zest to an intellectual banquet. There is no puffing in newspapers and play-bills, nor is the public ever assured by an anonymous friend that the spectacle will be entirely superb. The audience judges for itself, and the decision is seldom, if ever, reversed; because it consists of the most enlightened people of the capital. In short, there is a total absence, a studied rejection, of all those impudent quackeries, and unblushing impostures, to which the theatres here, continually resort to inveigle the mob into their toils. Nothing but the legitimate drama is admitted on the stage of the *Theatre Français*; nor would it be possible for the taste of the polite audience to be brought to endure the profanations nightly exhibited on the London boards.

## LETTER XVII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

WHEN I have nothing else to attract my attention, which is pretty often the case in this very dull city, I amuse myself with attending the debates in parliament, that are sometimes interesting from the subjects under discussion. In this way, I have had an opportunity of hearing the ablest speakers, on topics that afforded the best opportunities for the display of their talents. On a late occasion, in a question connected with African slavery, (a fruitful subject for declamation) Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Brougham, Sir James Mackintosh, Lord Lon-

donderry, and several others, made their best figure. Each in turn complained of the encouragement given to the slave trade by many of the European powers, in possession of colonies in the West Indies, and at the same time reluctantly acknowledged, that our abandoned Republic was the only government that heartily and in good earnest co-operated with them in their efforts to prevent it.

Humanity, when in its pure state, and uncontaminated by any mixture of interest or passion, is a widely extended and comprehensive feeling. It comprehends not merely one colour, one nation, and one quarter of the globe, but the whole human race in a greater or less degree. To oppress one people, and at the same time affect great commiseration for another, is not humanity, but hypocrisy. It is assuming a cloak for some interested purpose; either to impose upon the credulity of the world for objects of gain or ambition, or to prop up a falling reputation. If this government were really and sincerely actuated by a principle of humanity, not altogether confined to the colour of the epidermis, why has it lately permitted the Mussulmen to exercise the most cruel outrages on the Greeks; to carry on a war of extermination against Christians, who believe in the same Saviour as the people of England? Why did not Lord Strangford, the English ambassador at the Porte, while dining with the Grand Seignior, an honour never before conferred on a christian dog, and basking in the sunshine of Ottoman favour—why did he not take the opportunity to interfere to prevent the indiscriminate massacre of christians, men, women, and children?—Why?—because he enjoyed this very favour at the price of giving them up to the butcher—at the price of refusing admission on board the English vessels in the Archipelago, to those christian Greeks that fled from the Mussulman tyrant, who had issued a declaration that their existence could no longer be tolerated—and from the very first, siding with Mussulman executioners against christian victims; and the issuing of a declaration, prohibiting the Ionians, who are under English protection, from assisting their countrymen upon pain of death—at the price of giving an English escort to Turkish ships, loaded with men and stores, for the purpose of bringing a christian people to the sabre and the bowstring of an infidel oppressor—in short, at the price of abandoning all the obligations of justice, humanity, and religion.

Why did not Lord Strangford, at this auspicious moment, when the existence of the Ottoman power depended on the diversion made by England and Austria, stipulate with the

Turk for the abolition of the trade in human flesh, which is carried on in all parts of his empire, and under which thousands of WHITE CHRISTIAN SLAVES are every day sold in the markets of every Turkish city? A glorious opportunity offered itself to establish the reputation of British humanity beyond all question, by a stipulation in favour of white christian slaves, similar to that in behalf of black pagan ones. The interests of humanity would be better served by the former than by the latter. I have no particular disposition to question the motives of Mr. Wilberforce, in his long and persevering efforts to procure the abolition of the African slave trade; but whatever were his motives, I cannot but be of opinion, that by making slaves more valuable in the colonies than they were before, he has offered temptations of profit, more than equivalent to the difficulties thrown in the way of the trade. But the best men are apt to overlook obvious consequences in their headlong zeal to benefit mankind. Good intentions are common enough; but the wisdom to direct them to practical good is seldom their companion.

The better sort of members, such as Mr. Brougham, Mr. Wilberforce, Sir James Mackintosh, and others, are exceedingly worthy, useful, and able men. They discuss some questions with a sagacity and extent of research, highly honourable to themselves and to the country, reminding me not unfrequently of Mr. ———, Mr. ———, Mr. ———, and others of the late members of our congress. But shall I venture upon the heresy? Shall I dare, in the face of old habits, prejudices, and opinions fostered by education, strengthened by books, and the example of all around you, to assert, that these men are not equal to the orators just named? And yet this is as true as that you are alive. With the exception of Mr. Canning, there is scarcely the shadow of an orator in the house of commons; and the house of lords is, beyond all doubt, the most sleepy place in England, except the Italian opera and Mr. Campbell's lectures.

Mr. Brougham is a laborious speaker. To me there appears something somewhat grotesque in his attempts at impassioned oratory, wherein he occasionally displays his zeal and warmth in contortions of face and figure nearly approaching to the ludicrous. He has an iron face and an iron figure, both equally divested of grace or majesty, nor does his action or expression make amends for these deficiencies of face and person. Yet his habits of laborious investigation and research, his extensive range of memory, and his capacity for intellectual arrangement, make him, on the whole, a useful man of business, and a powerful pleader; for his eloquence is little more than spe-

cial pleading. As the leader of a party in the house of commons, he is at most, however, but second rate. He is much better in subjects where mere labour and investigation are required, and is pre-eminent on school committees and parliamentary inquiries, where he listens with the patience of a judge, and sifts the evidence with the indefatigable sagacity of a thorough-bred lawyer. But I have heard him occasionally on subjects of foreign policy, wherein the talents of a statesman are put to the test, and was surprised at his crudeness, as well as want of extent of idea and accuracy of information. I certainly have heard a member from our woods talk more sensibly, and display more statesman-like views of the relation of European nations with each other, and with the United States. This lameness, however, in the discussion of great political questions, seems common to almost all the great men here, either because those of the opposition do not know the state of their relations with foreign powers, and those of the cabinet do not choose to tell; or from a want of that enlargement of intellect which is the peculiar characteristic of a great statesman. I will do the opposition the justice to say, that they cannot, as they do in our congress, get whatever information they ask from the executive, and are therefore often obliged to grope in the dark. But Lord Londonderry certainly is in all the secrets, as foreign secretary, and he talks like a rebus, seemingly employing the whole force of his understanding in withholding, rather than communicating information. It is quite laughable to hear the Corinthian members cry, "hear, hear!" when he says any thing beyond the comprehension of mortal man. I certainly never saw a more laborious speaker; but his labour seems most preposterously employed, not in enlightening his hearers, but in perplexing their understandings in an equal degree with his own, by which means alone he seems to expect to carry his point. His logic is the logic of a perplexed, rather than a profound understanding, and his rhetoric is highly worthy of his logic. There is a story told here of a gentleman, who, after listening to his lordship for a long time, started up at length in great haste, and on being questioned where he was going, replied "to the house of peers, to know from Lord Liverpool what Lord Castlereagh means." His action is that of a pump-handle when in brisk motion, as you may have learned from Moore's epigram.

Sir James Mackintosh is, I think, a much better writer than speaker, although a very powerful orator on the whole. He is fluent and animated, but too florid and studied to appear natural. I can hardly tell what he wants to make him a fine speaker, except it be nature, or that art which supplies its

place in some degree. To read the papers and daily productions which record passing events, and confer a nine days immortality, one would suppose Sir James and his compeers were giants of the race of those who warred against the gods, with mountains and torrents of intellectual force and eloquence. But I must again caution you to beware of the deceptions practised upon us at home, by the monstrous and inflated style, which it is now fashionable to use in speaking of every thing rising above mediocrity. The system of puffing is at its most alarming height in this country, and it is quite impossible for the mere reader to judge of the merits of any public man. They must be every thing, or nothing—superlatively great or superlatively mean—the perfection of nature and intellect, or the extreme of littleness and folly.

It is thus that such writers, as the author of “*Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk*,” and hundreds of similar delineators of character, will speak of Edinburgh reviewers, and Ettrick shepherds, as if the former were of that order of men, of whom it is interesting to know, whether they wear short jackets or long coats in the country, and the latter were a Burns, the high priest of nature and simplicity, instead of the coarse and vulgar humourist of *Blackwood’s Magazine*. It is thus, too, that every person and every thing, which fashion or party-spirit idolizes for the moment, is wrought into the lineaments of sublimity and greatness, while the real and genuine candidates for immortality, like Sir James Mackintosh, are caricatured by the coarse eulogists, who affect to know what is really intellectual greatness, and have the consummate audacity to pronounce sentence of immortality with a degree of indiscriminate profligacy, that is quite sufficient to ruin a tolerable reputation.

Mr. Canning, for wit, grace, fluency, and satire, is excellent; but he only skirmishes, for the most part, with an argument, and is satisfied to raise a laugh rather than produce conviction. He is, however, the only man in the house who can keep the rotten borough-dandies awake during a speech, with the exception of Lord Londonderry, to whom they are bound in gratitude, or in hope, to listen, under the penalty of not getting a good place or pension.

If Mr. Wilberforce was not a pious and good man, I should say that he cants a little too much, and votes a little too often with ministers. There is, however, a reason for all things. Mr. Wilberforce is the political head and oracle of the methodists, who are now a body of very considerable weight and influence in parliament. I am of opinion there is a deal of underhand courtship going on between the ministry and metho-

dist leaders, the effects of which are seen in leaving out the queen's name from their liturgy, and the particular attention paid by Lord Londonderry to Mr. Wilberforce's opinions on all occasions. The established church begins to be not a little jealous of this pious intrigue; and it is a fact well known here, that Mr. Brougham's great national education bill was smothered in these mutual fears and antipathies. The dissenters and methodists, on one side, were afraid that it would throw into the hands of the established church too great opportunities of instilling their doctrines into the minds of the young people; and the established church was dissatisfied, that the act did not give it a more complete control over the religious opinions of those who were to be educated under the bill. All felt and acknowledged the want of education among the poorer class; all professed a sincere desire that this want should be supplied; but religious bigotry, or religious zeal, as it is politely called, stepped in, and thus condemned the children of the poor to ignorance, until they can reconcile these conflicting interests.

In the mean time the methodists are gathering strength every day. Their admirable system of worldly wisdom; their apparent zeal and sanctity; their watchful industry, not only in propagating their doctrines, but in stigmatizing those of other sects, together with the aid which a spirit of fanaticism always administers in the progress of a new religion, all combined, have contributed vastly to the increase of their numbers and influence. If I am not mistaken, the time is not far distant, when they will either force an union with the established church, or leave it in a minority. The methodists, and the methodistical church of England people, are now strong in parliament, and their force is daily increasing; for you will recollect, that they have ever refused to be considered as dissenters from the church of England, and that there is nothing in the tests, to which an orthodox methodist may not conscientiously accommodate himself.

I feel perfectly satisfied, that the weak, unsteady, and apparently unpurposed opposition, is rather detrimental than otherwise to the progress of reform in this country. The people rely upon men who have neither the power, nor, I firmly believe, the will, to breast the exigencies of the time, but who are a knot of peddling, tinkering politicians, that talk big, bluster finely, but are much more afraid of the Tower and the attorney-general, than of arbitrary power and parliamentary corruption. They are like your big fish, which are ever the greatest cowards. Estimating their own importance most highly, they are the first to run away; while the lesser fry,

confiding in their insignificance, remain behind, are caught, and cooked for want of higher fare. These men will never bring about a reform, such as is wanting to the prosperity of the people of this country. Those who undertake this glorious object, must not mind fine, pillory, or loss of ears. Nay, they must, like the noble patriots of our revolution, take the step that devotes them to death if they fail, to immortality if they succeed. Even if they fail, from the blood and the ashes of these unsuccessful victims, arises a host to consummate what they but began.

Nothing can equal the pretty exchange of complimentary eulogy, which occurs between the ministers and the opposition, whenever the question of enlightening foreign nations, teaching poor children to read, instead of giving their parents a chance of paying by their labours for their education, and such like excellent plans, come up. The noble Lord Londonderry cordially co-operates with the honourable member; while the honourable member seems infinitely delighted at the opportunity of voting for once on the side of ministers, and extols their humanity to negroes, instead of boldly and promptly exposing their hypocrisy, by placing their conduct to the people of England, Europe, Asia, and America, in contrast with this simulated humanity, assumed only for the purpose of deceiving mankind, and cheating the public opinion. Indeed, the opposition snatches with such avidity at every opportunity to be on good terms, and exchange civil speeches, that one cannot help suspecting they would be happy to consummate a permanent union, by surrendering the virgin purity of their patriotism into the arms of ministerial piety and benevolence. I may mistake, but in my poor opinion, the good people here stand but a bad chance for a reform in parliament, or any other branch of the government, if they depend upon the present opposition.

Since the time that Mr. Fox led the opposition, there has been no efficient one in the house of commons, any more than there have been any true patriots since the days of Russell, Hampden, and Sidney, who were willing to sacrifice life, liberty, and a good name, in behalf of the principles of freedom. It would seem, that almost all the stern, inflexible supporters of human rights came over to our country, and there planted the tree of liberty, which would not take root in England. You may form some idea of Sir James Mackintosh's notions of liberty, when I tell you that in this very debate, to which I referred in the early part of this letter, he took an opportunity to class the United States and Great Britain together, as "two nations mutually sharing the same freedom."

The art of raising the greatest possible quantity of money out of the people, comprehends the whole mystery of the English government. As I observed before, they are all very indifferent speakers, with the exception of Mr. Canning, and with the same exception, among the dullest persons in a society over which the genius of dulness presides. I am aware that there are two sorts of great men—those who talk wisely, and those who act wisely. The former are only theoretically or abstractedly wise; the latter practically so. It is difficult, indeed, to tell a man by his talk. I have frequently met with men who reversed Rochester's epitaph, and who never said a good thing in their whole lives, yet always acted with the most provoking wisdom, and always got the better of the great talkers. Still, it is pretty certain, that no one who talks well can be a great blockhead; and it is equally clear, I think, that many a great blockhead has chanced to stumble, or be driven into a system of policy, the accidental success of which has caused him to pass for a sage. The present ministers have kept their places, and lived to see the downfall of Napoleon: but they certainly were particularly indebted to an early Russian frost, and a weak opposition in parliament, for their triumphs.

Men of great and splendid talents are quite unnecessary in the ministry, except when any invasion of the ancient privileges of the people is meditated. Then Mr. Canning is put in requisition, to ridicule his opponents and gloss over the measure. At other times, Mr. Vansittart, or Lord Londonderry, is just as good as a Madison, or a Hamilton. On occasions of emergency, they send to France for Mr. Canning, to get Lord Liverpool, or Lord Londonderry out of a scrape. Feeling, as it would appear, his own consequence among these dull lords, Mr. Canning sometimes takes the liberty, as in the case of the Queen, to retire from the support of a ministerial measure. He also keeps up a familiar intercourse in France with Anacreon Moore, the writer of "Lascivious Lyrics," as Mr. Adams aptly calls him; though Moore is not only a public defaulter, but has likewise made his present majesty quite as ridiculous, as Peter Pindar did his revered father, George the Third—for whose memory I have a great respect, ever since his acquittal, as set forth in the laureat's immortal poem of "Judgment." The taking all these freedoms, shows, that both Mr. Canning and the ministers feel that they cannot do without him at a pinch. He is, indeed, now that poor Sheridan is gone, a first-rate wit, a star in Bœotia; excellent at a jest, delightful at a dinner table, but not very happy at alliteration, witness the unlucky one of "the revered and ruptured Ogden."

The ministerial wise-acres begin to suspect, that in putting



down Napoleon Bonaparte, that mighty schoolmaster of an old worn out world, they have fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire. The best politicians of the last hundred years, have always pointed the jealousies of Europe towards the Russian empire. But present fears and pressing interests caused the cabinets of Europe and England to lose sight of future dangers ; and there is not one of these powers, that does not look with trembling solicitude towards every movement of the emperor Alexander. The poor pageant, who occupies the throne of France, has been, for some time, vacillating between a desire to dissent from the policy of the Holy Alliance, and a fear of the consequences. I have reason to be persuaded, that the omission of King George to pay a visit to Paris originated in a demur on the part of Louis, to a proposition of the British cabinet in relation to the affairs of Greece and Turkey. Much difficulty exists in the French cabinet on this head ; and I have but little doubt, that it will lead to a change of ministers, if not of measures, in France.

The emperor of Austria, what between his fears of Russia, and of books bound in Russian leather, has no heart, just now, to attend to his favourite amusement of making sealing-wax. It is rumoured in the ——— circle, that he fainted not long ago at the smell of a book in Russian binding. The king of Prussia is so busy in warring against the four-and-twenty letters, and prosecuting authors for telling him the truth, that he has no time to attend to any thing else. But he is said to have very uneasy dreams. In fact, I assure you, there never was a set of poor people in such desperate perplexity, between a desire to restrain the projects of Russia, and a fear of the almost inevitable consequences of a war—bankruptcy and revolution.

In the mean time, the Russian government has been at the same moment negotiating a peace, and making preparations for war. The Russian armies are at present more numerous and efficient than those of all Europe besides, and are stationed on the frontiers of Turkey in such a way, as that Constantinople might be taken before the news of hostilities could reach London. Well may the British ministry tremble if a war take place. They have nothing left for it, but to swear there is no danger until the danger arrives, and then set the *Courier* and *Quarterly Review* abusing Alexander like a pickpocket. So soon as I see this, I shall be sure there is difficulty with Russia ; for it is always the signal for some refractory movements on the part of a foreign power. The first indication I had of the probable assertion of its independence by the French government, was from the abusive article in the *Quarterly*, which I

mentioned in a former letter. It is a bull-dog, which is always set at obnoxious people, before the masters come to blows.

## LETTER XVIII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

THIS country has, beyond doubt, a greater proportion of people without the necessities of life, or the means of honestly acquiring them, than any other I have ever visited. I do not know that they are more positively poor, but they certainly are so comparatively. A large portion of the labouring class here possess more actual property, than the same class of people in Italy, Spain, and Portugal; but they require more, because their taxes are far greater and their habits are different. In the south of Europe, the people live on grapes, chestnuts, olives, and other fruits that are plenty and cheap; at night they can sleep under a tree, or under the canopy of heaven; they neither want thick clothing nor constant fires in winter; nor is it necessary they should have a warm and weather-tight house over their heads. But the labouring Englishman, until of late years, was accustomed to meat sometimes, and always to bread, cheese, and beer, in a reasonable quantity. Now, it is otherwise with him. He inhabits too a climate humid at all times, and cold in winter, and cannot sleep in the air, or in an open hovel, without the risk, if not the certainty, of ruining his health. It is these and other considerations, that make his actual situation far worse than the peasant or the labourer in the south of Europe, although his actual comforts may appear superior to theirs. Indeed, it cannot be denied, and it is certainly not in triumph, but sorrow, that I am compelled to state, that the poor of this country are now, at this moment, more wretched, and more numerous, than any where on the continent of Europe—I believe I may say in the whole world. It is not uncommon to see in the country towns, thirty, forty, and fifty people, consisting of stout, hearty labourers, their wives and children, applying at some time for admission into the parish poor-houses. It is neither laziness nor improvidence, that has brought them to this; but the want of employment, and the exactions of the government and the clergy, which actually drive them into the poor-house for a refuge. If there ever were a noble nation sacrificed to the abuses of power; the extravagance of its rulers; and the patchwork system of ex-

pedients, invented by prodigality in the last stage of fatuity and desperation, it is this nation of Englishmen, who, in the course of their history, have equalled the Romans in patriotism, the Greeks in literature, and the Americans in defending their rights against the encroachments of power. But poverty and dependence, the offspring of financial swindling and misapplied resources, have undermined the noble foundation of the national character, and the superstructure seems crumbling and corroding fast away.

This abject poverty is the secret of almost all their mobs, crimes, and apparently ridiculous inconsistencies, that go near to deprive them of our sympathy. That they murmur at the government is because they want bread; that they rise in mobs, is not that the spirit of Radicalism, but the spirit of suffering, impels them to violence. That their crimes every day multiply, and the restraints of a severe penal code become more and more insufficient to prevent their transgressions, is, in a great measure, owing to their miserable situation, which makes a prison no longer terrible; transportation an object of hope rather than fear; and death itself an alternative hardly to be dreaded. The other day, a fellow, being sentenced to fourteen years' transportation, cried out, "God bless your honour, it's just what I wanted."

It is indeed impossible to conceive the capricious unheard of extravagance of the rich, which actually seems to keep pace with the increasing miseries of the poor. Every where, except among a very few of the old-fashioned nobility and gentry, I see the most wasteful follies, the most unbounded love, nay, passion, for expensive pageantry and vulgar ostentation. If a lady of fashion give a party, nothing will satisfy her, unless fruits equally tasteless and expensive are served up with a profusion equally senseless and absurd; and she would be miserable for life, if the number and the cost of each were not advertised in all the fashionable newspapers. The particulars of her dress, the quantity of diamonds, and the net value of the lady as she stood in her shoes, must also be published, in the style of a vender of quack-medicines, while every thing, which real good breeding and well constituted gentility would avoid and despise, is said and done, to make her equals envy, her inferiors despair, and the hungry multitude become more fully aware of their misery by comparison. It often makes me smile even in the bitterness of my feelings, to hear the lady of the gala simpering out, "Two guineas a-piece," when asked the price of such peaches as the pigs run away from in New England.

This extravagance is held by the adepts in political economy

to be a great national blessing. If, for instance, Madame Catalani receive a few thousand guineas for singing "God *shave* the king," as she always pronounces it, at galas and concerts, it is all for the good of the people of England, because she goes and spends the money in France or Italy, or invests it in the English funds, where the people have the pleasure of paying the interest. The great sums in fact, thus squandered away by the extravagance of the court and nobility, never return to the tenantry, from whom they are originally derived. That portion which does return is so long in coming, that poverty too often gets the start of it. But the greatest part goes to foreigners, without circulating at all among the community. Flatterers, dancers, singers, pimps — and a thousand useless, or worse than useless, people, share the spoil of prodigality, and carry the greatest part out of the country. It is only those immediately about the court, or who can gain the patronage of some court sycophant, that partake of this expenditure, or receive any benefit from it, either directly or indirectly. England at this moment, and most especially London, exhibits a striking proof, how little the boundless prodigality of a court and nobility can contribute to the real comfort of the community at large. There is more extravagance and more misery in London, than in any other city of the world.

In every country, which has been settled long enough to exhibit the invariable course of all earthly communities from rudeness to order, from order to refinement, from refinement to luxury, and from luxury to ruin, it has always happened, that the example has been first set among the higher orders. To them we may trace elegance and refinement, and from them is derived that example of profligate, luxurious sensuality, which corrupts the lower orders, and at length ends in the downfall of states and empires. When therefore the *Quarterly Review*, and the other stern advocates of despotism, talk of the ignorance, corruption, and wickedness of the lower orders, instead of deriving all this from Paine's works, Cobbett's tracts, and Carlile's and Hone's pamphlets, they should tell the honest truth, that it is the example of the higher orders, that has descended to a people, already fitted by their poverty to adopt the worst models. To a people prepared by education and example, precept and habit, to look up to princes and nobles; the fashion which is set them by these is more powerful and efficacious, than the best moral codes, and the most orthodox exhortations, enforced by abundance of societies for the bettering of mankind.

I do not think it is refining too much, to state, as one of the

causes of petty crime in this country, the mode in which so many of these cases are presented to the public in the newspapers. Almost every one of these has a column, and sometimes two, of reports of cases at the police-offices, for the gratification of their readers. If, as is very frequently the case, there be any thing odd or ridiculous in the culprit, or the offence, or the mode of examination, it never fails to be made still more so by the witty reporter, who involves the whole affair, magistrate and all, in fun and frolic. A crime is thus presented to the reader as a mere joke, an excellent subject for the wit of the justice, and the amusement of the public. It is divested of all its turpitude and atrocity, and instead of a serious offence to society, appears as a subject for jest and laughter. It is to be remembered, that the principal reading of the lower orders is confined to newspapers, and that the most interesting subjects of vulgar curiosity are the records of crimes and punishments. Now, if courts of justice and culprits are thus made to furnish subjects of merriment, and crimes become the objects of joke and ribaldry, it is very easy to be conceived, that those whose morality is not well fortified, will very likely yield to the seduction of such pleasant recreation.

If my preceding observations be correct, you will perceive, that it is scarcely possible there should not be a more than ordinary degree of turpitude, a greater portion of crime here, than is to be found among contemporary nations. In France, where the people are comparatively comfortable, and where the king and nobility have before them an awful example of the consequences of despising the just resentment of millions of human beings, crimes are diminishing every day. In this country, on the contrary, where the king and nobility seem to have forgotten that they only escaped a similar lesson by the breadth of a hair, crimes are every day increasing. They are gradually ascending into the more respectable classes, and descending to the meridian of childhood. In my occasional attendance at the Old Bailey, Hatton Garden, Bow Street, Guildhall, and other places where the police officers hold their state, I have frequently been shocked to see men and women, evidently well educated, and whose manners bore testimony to their former respectability, arraigned for crimes, not the effect of sudden passion or instantaneous impulse, but of reflection and plan; during the organization of which the crime and its probable consequences must have been looked steadily in the face. Such instances are not, however, frequent; but occurring even rarely, they point to a state of morals verging towards the last stage of corruption, or to a state of society, in which the

temptations of poverty are ascending to a higher class than usual.

My principal object in writing this long letter was to point out to you the inevitable consequences of a vast disproportion of wealth, and enormous public burthens, that press the people down to the dust; of those artificial distinctions of rank, which, being hereditary, require neither moral nor intellectual superiority to preserve them, and become in the end a warrant for the indulgence of every wanton and capricious impulse of folly or vice. This inequality of wealth, and these hereditary distinctions of rank, enable the possessors to despise the suffrages of mankind; to insult their poverty with a display of wasteful extravagance; and to corrupt their morals by examples of vicious indulgence. These enormous public burthens, the inattention of the well-beneficed clergy to almost every thing but the collection of tithes, together with the profligate extravagance of the rich and nobility, have, all combined, gone near to ruin one of the finest and noblest nations under the sun. That they are not thoroughly corrupted and debased is a proof of the excellent materials of which the national character was composed. At the time, or perhaps just before, our ancestors came to Plymouth, England might have challenged the world for inflexible integrity, diffused intelligence, and noble patriotism; nor was there a country in existence where the principles of civil liberty were more cherished or better understood.

Every day, and every country I visit, add to my affection for my home, and my attachment to a republican form of government. I am more and more convinced of its intrinsic superiority over all others, in diffusing a general and equal happiness over all; in preventing the permanent and lasting accumulation of wealth, which enables one class of men to tread on the necks of another from generation to generation; and in destroying that hereditary and low-lived feeling of inferiority, which debases the mass of the people, and crows the master spirit of manhood. It is not those who are best paid, or who wear the most diamonds, that are the greatest men. My Lord Londonderry, with his thousands and tens of thousands a year, will never be put on a level with Franklin, in his plain snuff-coloured coat; nor will Prince Esterhazy, whose diamonds made Sir Walter Scott's mouth water, ever reach the level of the simple majesty of Washington, in his black velvet suit. The very admiration which is bestowed upon such idle pageantry, not only by the people, but by the most exalted statesmen, and warriors, and divines; the manner in which it is puffed, not only in newspapers, but in productions that affect to be literary, all together furnish the most unequivocal proof

of the superior manliness and dignity of the simple republican character. So far, therefore, from being ashamed that our government and its officers cannot afford this effeminate trumpery, we should be proud of it, as a proof that the people are well governed, since their earnings are not wasted in boundless extravagance and childish parade.

## LETTER XIX.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

IN running the parallel between our government and that of England, the House of Lords having been, most unaptly as I think, compared to the Senate of the United States, it may be neither uninstrusive, nor without amusement, to inquire into the respective points of their resemblance.

To begin with the first that naturally presents itself. The Senate of the United States is an elective body, the members of which are chosen for six years. The House of Lords is composed of members who sit there for life, and their eldest sons after them, by the right of hereditary succession. The members of our Senate are all equal; there is neither distinction of rank nor precedence, nor seniority, but what is freely awarded to merit or talents. In the House of Lords there is, on the contrary, an endless diversity of rank and pretension, which must obviously tend to destroy, or at least diminish, the feeling of equality, even where a man is said to be among his peers. In fact, it is this nice and almost imperceptible gradation of ranks, the strictness with which it is every where enforced, and the submission every where paid to it, that constitutes, in my opinion, the *cement* of every monarchical government.

This system of gradation in the ladder of life is here brought to great perfection, and its parts adjusted with the nicest exactness. Thus a duke precedes a marquis, in entering a room, going to dinner, or marching in procession. Besides this, his mantle has "*four guards*," and his coronet has only leaves without pearls! But even dukes have their degrees; and a duke of yesterday is entitled to turn his back upon one of to-day, on all occasions of etiquette.

A marquis, although "most noble," carries the badge of inferiority in his mantle of only "three doublings and a half," and his coronet of pearls and strawberry leaves, all of a height. An earl is only right honourable; his mantle has only three doublings, and his coronet has the pearls raised upon points, with the leaves low between. A viscount, although right ho-

nourable too, has only two doublings and a half to his mantle, and his coronet is only "pearled with a row of pearls close to the chaplet." A baron is right honourable as well as the viscount; but his inferiority is demonstrated by a mantle with only two doublings, and a coronet with only six pearls.

You will perceive, by this detail, how the spirit of personal independence and the noble self-consciousness, which alone give dignity to man, must be repressed by these outward and palpable insignia of inferiority, which derive an importance from habit and custom. Servility to superiors, and supercilious airs of superiority towards inferiors, together with a miserable subserviency to those who can bestow on them the privilege of a cloth of state, or of turning their backs upon those who before turned their backs upon them, must naturally result from such a system of nicely graduated importance. No one, that ever mixes in titled society, can fail to perceive the relative importance accorded to these different ranks, and, more especially, the airs of superiority assumed by a lady of the old nobility over an upstart titled dame of yesterday. In fact, the lord or the lady who marches first of their grade at a coronation, has all the superiority over those that march at the other end, that the leader of a herd of buffaloes has over the rest of the rabble in the rear.

But the privileges of carrying a cloth of state, marching first in a procession, and having their trains borne by barons', knights', or esquires' ladies, are not the only ones enjoyed by the nobility. They possess certain rights and exemptions, which, it will be perceived, give them a decided advantage over other subjects of this realm. Their persons are at all times privileged from arrests, except for contempt of the king, felony, breach of the peace, or treason. No *capias* can be sued out against them for trespass or debt; nor can *essoign* lie against a peer of the realm. In civil causes they are not to be impanneled upon juries; and in case a peer be returned upon a jury, there is a special writ for his discharge. They cannot be bound over to keep the peace, any further than pledging their honour for that purpose. Contrary to the custom of the lower house of parliament, they can constitute a proxy to vote for them during their absence. A peer is not subject to outlawry in any civil action, nor can any attachment lie against him. In calling out the *posse comitatus* for the suppression of riots, peers are exempted from obeying the commands of the sheriff. The statute of *Scandatum Magnatum* makes it a crime to raise injurious reports against them, such as in the case of a commoner could not be punished by law. In many cases the houses of peers cannot be entered by the officers of justice, ex-



cept on the authority of a warrant under the king's own hand, and countersigned by six privy councillors, four of whom must be peers of the realm. Every peer has what is called the privilege of *qualifying* a certain number of chaplains, who, on receiving a dispensation from their metropolitan, ratified under the great seal, may hold a *plurality* of benefices. A duke may qualify six chaplains; a marquis and earl five each; a viscount four; and a baron three. It is by the exercise of this privilege of "qualifying," that the law with respect to a plurality of benefices may be evaded by every priest who can secure the patronage of a peer.

You will readily perceive by the foregoing, which is a mere sketch of the privileges and exemptions of the members of the House of Peers, that it is constituted upon principles essentially different from our Senate, the members of which are appointed for only six years, by the representatives of the several states, and enjoy no other privilege but that which is held in common with every other representative of the people, and is essential to the discharge of their public duties, the privilege of exemption from arrest during the session of congress, and in going and returning therefrom. A peer being, it is true, an hereditary legislator, the general freedom he enjoys from arrest naturally arises from his being always held to be employed in that capacity. But this, among other features, exhibits more distinctly the wide dissimilarity of the two bodies.

That the Senate of the United States stands in a situation, with regard to the executive and House of Representatives, analogous to that of the House of Peers in relation to the king and the House of Commons, is most undoubtedly true. Its legislative powers, as well as its judicial functions, are, in many important cases the same. But so long as they are constituted upon principles so totally distinct and irreconcilable—so long as the one is hereditary, the other elective—so long as one is the creation of the king, the other the creature of the people, it seems undeniable, that nothing but error and mischief can result from drawing precedents, in matters of principle or politics, from a British House of Peers, for the imitation of the Senate of the United States.

There are a few other points which occur to me, as rendering this separation of the two bodies still wider. When a senator of the United States accepts an office from the executive, he forfeits his seat, and remains ineligible so long as he retains the office. Hence, although the patronage of the executive may tempt him to a desertion of his principles *before* he receives his reward, he remains ever afterwards incapable of betraying the people in the capacity of their representative.

But it is otherwise in the British House of Peers, where a man may hold a dozen places at the pleasure of the king, without forfeiting his seat. In the present House of Peers, there are somewhere (for I took the trouble to count them) about one hundred and eighty placemen, who enjoy offices either of profit, or honour, or both. In the United States, a senator, when he receives the price of his sacrifice of principle, becomes of no value to the purchaser.

## LETTER XX.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

YOU may form some notion of the resemblance, in point of substantial reality, between the House of Commons here, and our House of Representatives, which, in running the parallel between the two systems of government, have been compared to each other, by the fact, that fifteen thousand voters return a majority in the former body. There is one nobleman who sends twelve members, and there are at Birmingham and Manchester, containing between them upwards of two hundred thousand inhabitants, that send none. Counties, containing from one to three or four hundred thousand inhabitants, have no more weight in the House of Commons, than a borough in which there are some half-a-dozen voters, who return two members. Nay, the members from the rotten boroughs are actually of more consequence in the house, from being notoriously articles of sale, and at the command of the highest bidder; whereas, those from the counties, being sometimes men of independence and principle, are listened to quietly and indifferently, and suffered to take their own way, from a conviction that there is no use in tampering with them.

The representatives of the boroughs, on the contrary, are either, for the most part, the proprietors of the boroughs themselves, their sons, brothers, &c. or they are mere creatures of the proprietor; or they are persons who can afford to bribe high, because they mean to be bribed high in turn; or lastly, they are persons of political talents, who can get into parliament only through the patronage of some borough-holder, who is either a partisan of the minister, and wishes to furnish him an able supporter, or who expects to make himself of consequence by setting his great mastiff to bark at him. The opportunity thus afforded, of getting men of talents into the House, who would otherwise perhaps not attain a seat, has been made one great ground of defence to the borough-system.

There is nothing approaching to, or resembling an equality

in the exercise of the right of suffrage ; there is nothing which approaches to an apportionment of the number of representatives to the number of freeholders ; there is nothing, in short, in the system, adapted to those changes which time and circumstances produce in every nation, and according to which its government ought to be modified. Boroughs without trade or importance, and almost without inhabitants, return members to parliament, because they possessed all these some centuries ago ; while vast cities, which have grown up into wealth, importance, and numbers, are denied the privilege of representation, because some centuries ago they were not in existence. No government, and, least of all, any system of representation can be applicable to the situation of a people, where changes of this kind are totally disregarded.

There have been vast and learned dissertations, of late, as to the question of who voted, and who did not vote, for members of parliament in the reign of Henry the Third. The advocates of a general distribution of the right of suffrage lay great stress upon certain equivocal authorities, on which they found the doctrine of universal suffrage, as respected the freeman of England. But then, who were the freemen of England at that time ? As nothing is settled here according to the enlarged principles of human rights, or in accordance with those changes which time inevitably produces in men and things, resort is always had to ancient precedents, many of them entirely inapplicable to the present state of England, and to laws and customs questionable in their existence, or, if not questionable, no longer founded in reason or expediency. A jury of antiquaries now decide on the rights of Englishmen. Hence, it is considered of infinite importance to ascertain the fact, whether the first parliament of England was originally the delegated representative of all the freeholders of England. That this was actually the case appears, both from the very origin of that assembly, as well as from various other authorities. The peers represent themselves ; but as it would be manifestly impossible for the people to sit collectively and legislate for themselves, they delegated their powers to their representatives. Hence, the common language of the early writers on the constitution is the unqualified assertion, that every Englishman is present, either by himself or his representative, in the English parliament. If this does not mean, that every English freeholder has a voice in the election of his representative, it means nothing but mockery and nonsense.

The Wittenagemot, the Saxon parliament, and the original of the English one, was unquestionably an assembly modelled on those free principles common at that time, and from the

earliest ages, to the northern nations, who, according to Tacitus, were all governed by their own consent alone—*De minoribus rebus principes consultant, de majoribus omnes*. Xephiline also, speaking of the Britons, tells us, *apud hos, populus magno ex parte principatum tenet*. It is true, the feudal system, which succeeded, subverted the ancient freedom of British and Saxon institutions, yet this does not impeach the validity of the people's claim to a fair representation in parliament, especially in a country where antiquity supersedes every thing; since the freedom, spoken of by Tacitus and Xephiline, was far more ancient than the feudal system, which was established by force and fraud upon its ruins.

What is called *radicalism* here, consists principally in advocating, not exactly universal suffrage, but in giving the right of voting for members of parliament to all "resident householders," paying taxes, as they generally do, to an amount which one would think fairly entitles them to a vote for those who enact them. This, you will perceive, is little more than putting the right of voting for members of parliament on the same footing with the right of voting for a member of congress, in most of the states, at least in very many of them. The great objection to this, even with those who think parliamentary reform indispensably necessary to the security of the government, is, that it will make the House of Commons a democratic body. It appears to me, that if that house is not the representative of the commons, or the people, or the democracy of England, it is worse than nothing; for it was originally, beyond doubt, essentially the democratic branch of the government. Be this as it may, the cry of radical, or democrat, will set even the most liberal of these patriots legislating against the people with all his might.

I happened to be present, not long since, when Lord John Russell made his motion for extending the right of representation in parliament, to certain of the great towns, and taking it away, or buying it, of some of the most contemptible of the boroughs. He stated various instances of corruption in the elections for boroughs, alluding to them by name, and explicitly maintained, that, in the present state of things, where, in a vast many cases, some twenty, ten, or perhaps fewer electors, "little better than paupers," were to return one or two members, it was next to impossible to prevent these beggarly voters from selling, and some rich purchaser from buying, a seat. All the acts of parliament, he said, for preventing this system of corruption, were evaded by dexterous dealers in boroughs; and the practice of selling votes was now as common as that of selling wool, or cheese, or any marketable com-

modity. It was in this manner, or by the influence of borough proprietors, who either represented them in person, or bargained for them with the minister, that about three hundred members were returned to the house.

Lord John called upon the Marquis of Londonderry to deny these facts, and challenged denial from any member. His lordship did not deny them, for it is not many years since a case of this kind was brought home to himself. Nobody denied them; and, in fact, it seemed as if it were a matter of too little consequence to call for denial. He might just as well have complained of a notorious strumpet for selling her favours, to the young members who were lounging about, yawning most piteously at such *stuff*, or nodding in their seats, half asleep, till roused by the noble marquis, whose profound, or rather perplexed, eloquence, every now and then waked them up, and caused them to cry "hear! hear!" with vast vociferation.

You will perceive, from the foregoing details, that there is nothing more than a mere outside resemblance, between the House of Commons here, and the House of Representatives at home. The latter really represents the people of the United States; the former represents the mere paper money and patronage of the government. A large proportion of the members of parliament only represent a few paupers, whose votes they have purchased, and the numbers of these representatives actually counterbalance, and outvote, the representatives of the merchants, manufacturers, and agriculturists combined. The price of a borough, which returns two members, is enhanced sometimes four, six, ten, twenty fold, by that privilege—can we wonder, then, if the purchaser is anxious to make the most of such an expensive bauble? So, when a man buys the votes of a borough at a high price, is it not to be expected he will sell his own to the highest bidder? The whole system is fraught with corruption. It leads men into temptation precisely where there is the greatest danger of falling, and where a fall is accompanied with the most extensive evils.

## LETTER XXI.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

IN my last two or three letters, I attempted to give you some idea of the real nature and spirit of this government, not by vague declamations, borrowed from their own writers, or the partial ignorance of foreigners, but by sketching some of those

features, which, although they do not strike at first sight, finally, on a closer examination, are found to give a character to the whole composition. Much has been said and written of this government which it never deserved ; and much which, if it ever merited, it merits no longer. But it is difficult to shake a long established belief, or to weaken our confidence in a good character, sustained for a considerable length of time. It is right it should be so, or else the fruits of a whole age of virtuous actions might be blasted in a moment by a breath of calumny.

As all things are however good by comparison, and as it is the custom of most Englishmen to insist upon some mysterious, occult, invisible, and indefinable superiority of their government over all others, and most especially over our republic, it may be worth while to institute a short comparison between the two. Declamation is a good prop to error ; but facts are the best support of truth.

The independence of an English jury, of the present day, has been greatly overrated, because, in a few instances, state prosecutions have failed in the City of London. This fact only proves what I have just urged, that an independence of the king, or at least, a partial dependence on the people, is essential to the security of the subject. The sheriff of London is chosen by the livery of London, which is essentially a democratic body. It is therefore highly probable, that in a cause where the rights of the people are opposed to the pretensions of the king, he will not summon a jury biassed in favour of the latter.

In all the counties of Great Britain, with perhaps one or two exceptions, where the right is vested in some nobleman, the sheriffs are appointed by the king. That his majesty and his council will select the most loyal supporters of the prerogative, is at least naturally to be expected, and most especially at the present crisis, when the people and the king are perpetually in conflict. In the large cities, the appointment of the sheriff is sometimes in the corporation or in the guilds ; and in proportion as these are popular, or the creatures of some courtier, which last is generally the case, the independence of juries may be inferred. Out of London, we hear of no acquittals of radicals, nor any condemnation of soldiers for riding over and shooting unarmed citizens, men, women, and children.

But even admitting the trial by jury, and habeas corpus, to subsist in this country in all their purity, still they are partially suspended, of late almost every year, under some pretence of public danger ; that is, whenever the public sentiment,

the servility of sheriffs, and the subserviency of juries, cannot be sufficiently calculated upon for the purposes of oppression.

Again: the security of a person is at the mercy of a press-gang, from whose lawless fangs no man with a ragged coat is exempt. Instances are continually occurring, where the sons of the country people, in roaming about London, and elsewhere, at the naval stations, are kidnapped by the press-gangs, and carried on board of ships, where it rests with the caprice, or the necessities of the officers, either to let him go or to take him to sea, where he is not heard of by his friends for years. On the other hand, the security of property, at least of the produce of landed property, is, I may say, destroyed, by being subjected to taxation by a parliament, in which the far greater proportion of those who pay them have no representatives.

But admitting, for the sake of argument, that the two countries are on a par, with respect to the two great ends of government, security of person and property; I would then put their excellence to the test, by inquiring, which attains these great objects at the least sacrifice of property and independence? The comparison is perfectly simple, as respects the first. There are twenty millions of people in Great Britain, and ten in the United States. Of the former, one-seventh are paupers, not taxable; of the latter, about the same proportion are negroes, also not taxable; at least their owners pay their taxes. We will put the negroes against the paupers, and the proportion will still remain the same; that is, about double the number of taxable persons in this country, that there is in the United States. We will put the whole of the expenditures of the latter at twenty millions of dollars per annum, which is a very large allowance for the present year, I am sure, and contrast it with the 53,289,754*l.* sterling yearly expenditure of this government, including interest on the public debt. The mere annual expence of the British government, exclusive of the interest of the public debt, amounts to upwards of twenty-two millions of pounds sterling; that is to say, at the rate of about twenty-two shillings sterling a head for every man, woman, and child in Great Britain. Add to this the interest on the public debt, the tithes, poor-rates, &c. and it will amount to between two or three times as much more, making an average of about fourteen dollars a head for every soul in Great Britain. In the United States the average is less than two dollars, or about one-seventh. It will appear, therefore, that the people of the United States pay only one-seventh of the sum per annum for the security of person and property, that the people of this country do for the attainment of similar blessings.

Of the state of religion, morals, and manners, I have given

you some sketches in my former letters. Where crimes are most frequent, and violations of decency most public and most common, it is but empty boasting to make pretensions to superior piety, morality, or refinement. There may be pious, virtuous, and refined individuals, but the nation can possess no extraordinary share of either. If we take this criterion, I apprehend it will be found, that England has little to boast of in these particulars. Certain it is, however, that in no city have I heard of so many crimes, and so many violations of public decency, as occur in London. If there be, in reality, any extraordinary degree of evangelical piety, or orthodox religion here, it does not appear to be of that species which hold the reins of human passions, and places the curb in the hard mouth of wilful wickedness. It seems to vent itself in strange and abstract doctrines of mysterious subtlety—in Bible and Missionary Societies, whose remote objects appear to attract almost exclusive attention, while the corruptions, that walk at noonday, and stink in our very nostrils, are either neglected, or become indifferent, by being so common. It would seem to consist in the doctrine of old fanaticism, or still older hypocrisy, of making the conversion of one Pagan an equivalent for the loss of a hundred Christian souls; of purchasing pardon for the habitual breach of moral laws and social duties, by an infuriated zeal in converting people who inhabit the uttermost parts of the earth. That such a perversion of the true ends of religion, and such principles of action, should lead to an era of multiplied crimes, and endless offences against human laws, is not any subject of surprise, since all human experience goes to prove, that the separation of morality and religion is in the end fatal to both.

## LETTER XXII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

KINGS would, at all times, I believe, if left to their choice, rather govern by opinion than by force, by love than by fear. An army of pensioned writers, when it will suffice to support the king's popularity, will, in most cases, be preferred to an army of soldiers to maintain his authority, for at least two special reasons. The former method is by far the cheaper; since a few pensions, a paltry title, a ring, a picture, or a letter written by his majesty's own hand, will very generally neutralize, if not correct, the most stubborn literary patriot, and so completely alter his perception of things, that a country, which



only yesterday was the most oppressed and miserable, becomes to-morrow the happiest in the world. For instance, Thomas Campbell, whose noble and affecting strains on the subject of Polish freedom and Irish oppression are remembered by every American reader, has dwindled into the nominal editor of a tory magazine, and gone over from the oppressed to the oppressor. I do not say this change was wrought by a pension, of two or three hundred pounds a year; but when a man changes his sentiments very suddenly, and receives a pension immediately afterwards, it is difficult to resist the conviction that there is some connexion between the two.

The laureat, Southey, was seduced from the arms of Wat Tyler, by the irresistible attractions of sack and sugar. A hundred a year, and a butt of sack, did his business. They so wrought upon his conscience, that from a downright patriot, he became first a flatterer of kings, and next a fanatical advocate of every species of pious fraud and kingly pretension. I verily believe the poor man is sincere now; for hypocrisy is too wary and worldly-minded to give in to such fantastic fooleries as the laureat has lately committed. It is often the case, that men are inducted into a great devotion for principles, to which they were at first but little attached, by the aid of a sound drubbing or two, which operates like persecution upon new modes of faith, making what was before perhaps little better than hypocrisy, a confirmed and obstinate conviction. Few persons have been more persecuted in this way than the unfortunate laureat. When he was a patriot, he was terribly persecuted by the Anti-jacobin, which parodied his Sapphics, and, what every body thought impossible, made them even more ridiculous than they were originally. After he was converted to loyalty by sack and sugar, and a hundred a year, his old friends, whom he had abandoned, attacked him with every weapon of ridicule and severity; while his new allies, feeling rather ashamed of their new convert, left him to the poor consolation of praising himself, which he does now at every convenient opportunity. As he was drubbed into a perfect conviction of the truth of his newly adopted principles, so in like manner has he been convinced of his own great merit and talents by the ridicule and incredulity of the world. In attempting to make head against these, he was so often obliged to bear testimony in favour of himself, that he at length became a sincere convert to his own absurdities, and grew to believe in himself, as a man comes to believe in a story of his own invention, by dint of eternal repetition. What the laureat does with his butt of sack is a profound secret in the republic of letters. He cannot drink it, certainly, or else Jack Falstaff

was even a greater liar than he has credit for being. If, as he affirms, "a good sherris sack hath a two-fold operation"—if "it ascends me to the brain, and there dries the vapours," the laureat had better set about drinking it, for "by'r Lady," brother, another birth-day poem will finish honest Bob Southey, unless he disperse the aforesaid vapours. He begins to reverse all the rules of composition of late; for it may lawfully be said of him, that he writes prose like a madman, and poetry like a fool. I am sorry for him; for, notwithstanding his overbearing self-sufficiency; his desertion of the cause of freedom; his virulent invectives against his opponents; his rampant conceit, and his utter want of all literary courtesy; I am assured that his character in private life is amiable and exemplary.

An army of authors is a much cheaper support of royalty than an army of soldiers, and has this special recommendation besides, that it not only can uphold the king's authority while living, but give him a good name after death.

But the trade of a king is not near so good as it used to be. At this time, when there seems to be a general rebellion of the human understanding against the abuses and exactions of antiquated tyranny, it has become indispensable for royalty to turn its attentions more particularly to the people. For this purpose, it is considered equally essential to laud the characters and manners of kings; to maintain the superiority of that system of government of which they are the heads; and to denounce, on all occasions, those principles of freedom, which are as much, and as surely, the product of intellectual advancement, as the blossom is of the sun.

The whole tide of corruption has consequently turned into these channels; and in order to render the means of depressing mankind more effectual, it has become more than ever necessary, that the press should be either corrupted or enslaved. You perhaps have not remarked it, but it is becoming every day more and more evident, that republicanism and republicans must be either rendered odious and detestable in the eyes of nations, by reiterated falsehoods and misrepresentations, or there will be shortly little security for many thrones of Europe. One or other, the old or the new world, must change its governments. A plan has therefore been devised, and is now in most promising progress, in Europe, for controuling the freedom of the press, on the one hand by fines, prosecutions, and censorships; and on the other to render it subservient to the purposes of antiquated oppressions, ignorance, and superstition, by means of pensions, patronage, sinecures, and paltry titles, that sink the man of genius into a mere courtier.

In the progress of this deep laid plot against the human understanding, we have seen, that only those republican writers whose efforts were not the most dangerous, either from want of talents or of a popular mode of addressing the multitude, are tolerated. The moment a popular writer becomes dangerous by his power of addressing the public feelings, himself and his writings are singled out for the lash of the law or the church. Under some pretence of blasphemy, if they can find no other, the author is prosecuted, fined, and ruined; and his book, if not entirely suppressed, becomes an object for all the hirelings to bark at, from the *Quarterly Review* to *Blackwood's Magazine*.

But in a government in which the whole wealth of the state can be employed almost at will in the wages of corruption, the means of influencing and controuling the press are not confined to mere oppression and punishment. If, for instance, a writer possess too much courage to be frightened, or too much honesty to be bribed into a sacrifice of his principles, they set the *Quarterly Review* upon him. That excellent, conscientious, and disinterested publication, begins by charging him with radicalism and infidelity. The *Literary Gazette* repeats the tale to the *New Monthly* and the *John Bull*; the *New Monthly* to the *Beacon* and *Blackwood's Magazine*; and thus the cry is sounded from the London Monument to Edinburgh Cross. This never fails to alarm the rich and privileged orders; in fact, all those whose opinions have great influence in society, and to whom an author looks up, not only for reputation, but patronage, at least so far as to the purchase of his book. Few men, however great may be their civil courage, can resist a combined and successful attack upon their purse and character at the same time. It therefore happens, in a vast many instances, that, unless the *Edinburgh Review* and its followers take up the cudgels, on the other side, the poor man recants in his next publication, accommodates himself to the views of our ministerial critic, and sacrifices his principles to save the remnant of his good name, and find purchasers for his book.

Others, however, who, like Mr. Southey and Mr. Gifford, are naturally inclined to become pensioners and parasites, have their virgin purity assailed and speedily overcome by the seductive applications of certain agreeable sinecures, that are generally found to be quite irresistible. One of these, it is well known, caused Mr. Southey to abjure his Joan of Arc and Wat Tyler, and fairly converted him from Dom Daniels, jacobin epics, and republican sapphics, into a loving coadjutor of Messrs. Gifford and Canning, who, erewhile, had set the whole universe laughing at him and his sapphics in the *Anti-jacobin*. That arch enemy of our country, Mr. William Gifford, is clerk

to the honourable band of pensioners; an excellent place, with a good salary, nothing to do, and twelve hundred buttons to his coronation coat. This is as it should be. There is a fitness of things in a pensioned writer being clerk to a band of pensioners.

Thomas Campbell, alack for genius! is also a pensioner of the king, and has been placed at the head of the *New Monthly Magazine*, with the well known object of putting down, or superseding the *Monthly*; for you must know it is common here, not only with tavern-keepers, who let out their houses to the public, but also with authors, who let out their consciences to the best paymaster, to juggle each other out of his custom, by putting up a similar sign; that is to say, christening their new bantling by the name of some well known and popular establishment. There is something exceedingly contemptible in this; but really, the arts of literature, as practised here now, graze very closely upon the skirts of the noble art of swindling. This setting up a spurious magazine, with the same title which is borne by one already popular and well known, to my mind, is very little better than getting into society, and borrowing money, under the name and on the credit of some respectable person. The mere tagging of the epithet "*New*" to it, is nothing, since the generality of people will suppose it nothing more than a new series of the same work.

The *New Monthly* is, in every respect, a complete contrast to the *Monthly Magazine*—every way inferior in talent, in principle, instruction, and amusement. The *Monthly Magazine*, has, for many years past been conducted with much ability; and is, at this moment, in my opinion, the best publication in Great Britain of the kind. The *New Monthly*, on the contrary, is a mere collection of frivolous articles, principally composed of notices of second hand German literature; letters from Grimus Short; abortive attempts at the pathetic, and still more abortive attempts at wit and satire.

The *Monthly Magazine* has always displayed a most liberal disposition towards our country, and dealt with us in the spirit of friendly intercourse. It has, on all occasions, been the advocate of rational freedom, and maintained, with equal zeal and ability, those sober doctrines of political right, which are as free from the license of anarchy, as they are from the chains of despotism. It has always spoken with a just discrimination of our character, manners, and literature; neither elevating us above the scale of human excellence, nor debasing us to the level of profligate boors. In short, if we are to depend upon foreign periodical literature, the *Monthly Maga-*

zine is, beyond doubt, in every point of view, entitled to the first selection, since it neither pampers our vanity, nor outrages our just feelings of pride and patriotism.

Besides Messrs. Gifford, Southey, Campbell, and others, there are hundreds of inferior note, at least that are not so well known on our side of the water, who are in the enjoyment of places, pensions, and patronage, of some sort or other. I will not trouble you with any more of these. It is sufficient for me to assure you, that very little independence is to be looked for, either in the reviews or Magazines, with few exceptions. Almost every one of these was either originally established for certain religious or political objects, or has been seduced by bribery and patronage to become a hot partisan. The government having the heaviest purse, and the most extensive patronage, is, of course, the best paymaster, and consequently retains by far the greater proportion of authors, either as apologists of itself, or calumniators of others. Hence it is, that we see them industriously employing all their learning and talents in propping up old abuses, and recommending new ones; mingling the praises of religion with the grossest flattery of those whose whole conduct belies its precepts; covering the indulgence of the bitterest, most malignant passions, with the thin pretext of orthodox piety; making a parade of their faith in ribald farce and impious tragedies; spicing the keenest conflicts of interest and ambition with an ample sprinkling of pure ministerial orthodoxy; and joining their voices to the full chorus of cant, which, under the auspices of the Holy Alliance, now echoes through half the world. It is in this way they either repay the bounty of the ministry, or insinuate themselves into the lap of new rewards, by means of new services.

When a writer once consents to receive a benefit, be it what it may, the tenure of which is, that he shall not write any thing not palatable to the patron, he sells his birth-right for a mess of pottage; the wings of his genius are clipped by the sword of power, and his intellectual faculties become cramped in their exercise. When old Faustus, according to the story, sold himself to Satan, he gained by his bargain, at least, an enlargement of his powers, both of mind and body; his genius expanded, and he was enabled to comprehend what was before beyond the reach of his mind. But when Messrs. Southey and Campbell sold themselves, they seem to have lost the talent they before possessed; and, like the traitor Arnold, carried with them nothing but their disgrace. The indifferent poetry of the patriot Southey, has become ten times more so since he became a pensioner; and the genius of

Thomas Campbell seems to have deserted him, the moment he entered within the magic circle of ministerial patronage.

In an age of ignorance and superstition, it may be, that literature will find it necessary to appeal to an enlightened monarch, or his minister, for that support which the indifference of the public denies him ; or for that protection which the bigotry of ecclesiastical power renders necessary. But at this time, when the taste and liberality of the people are amply sufficient to remunerate the highest efforts of genius, it is not necessary that it should grovel at the foot of power for protection, nor prostitute its independence for bread. It is now but seldom that talent appeals in vain to the patronage of nations, when it comes recommended by independent principles and honest patriotism. A people that wish to be free, must take the exclusive controul of literature out of the hands of their governments.

### LETTER XXIII.

DEAR BROTHER,

London.

MUCH of the lighter kind of literature here, such as poetry, novels, and the like, having no bearing on politics, is dependant on the patronage of the booksellers, between whom, and the authors, there is a good deal of bye-play and management. A combination of booksellers can easily produce a gale of popularity, that will frequently waft a book through half a dozen editions. When they find a poet somewhat better at a rant than his fellows, or a novel writer gifted with a more than ordinary talent for caricaturing human nature, they commonly unite to give him a *run*, as it is called, for a season at least, because it is indispensable to the profits of their business, that there should be some few authors, whose names alone will ensure the sale of their works.

You are to understand, that there is abundance of second and third rate reviews and magazines, in one way or other partially under the influence of booksellers, and who will, at any time, say a good word for a book, if the author or publisher will only send them a copy, with a polite note, complimenting their taste, and calling their review or magazine, "your valuable publication." These are set to work to inflate the reputation of the fortunate authors, selected by the trade for a run for the season. The impulse given by these means in London, soon extends to all the provincial towns. Edition after edition is put forth with inconceivable rapidity, and the author be-

comes famous for at least nine days, while the booksellers laugh, it may be, in their sleeves, and pocket the money. Here, in London, the people of real taste, who are not led away by this whiff of popularity, laugh at all this mummery. The provincial towns, however, oftener yawn than laugh over the book, without daring to dissent from the unquestionable award of the London Literary Gazette, or the anonymous testimony of some newspaper critic. In a little while they wake up, and after rubbing their eyes and yawning some twenty times, begin to suspect that they want taste, rather than that the author lacks talents, or the reviewer judgment. As no man, however, can permanently cherish the idea of being a block-head, without becoming either a sage or a madman, these doubts settle gradually into a conviction that the book is deficient in merit, rather than the reader in taste. The delusion is then over—the bard or the novelist walks quietly into oblivion—the booksellers jingle their money, and prepare to start another of these overgrown yearlings. Thus runs the race of this species of literature, and thus are honest England and simple America played with by reviewers and booksellers. There was, a few months ago, a genius called the Rev. Mr. Croly, that always wrote upon the hot crust of a volcano, who was patted on the back, until he actually stood beside some of the great poets without blushing. On the contrary, he determined to make hay while the sun shone, in the true spirit of a modern bard. He wrote poetry faster than the “great unknown ;” and, by means of divers blasts of the reviewers’ trumpets, actually made a little fortune, before the town discovered he had asses’ ears, and was a most lusty brayer.

Literature, like almost every other trade in this country, is not only overstocked with workmen, but with a vast many very indifferent ones, and it is with their books as with other manufactures—if they did not find an extensive market in our country, one half of the artists would starve. It is inconceivable what a vast literary taste there is in England ; that is to say, a taste for literary scandal, tittle-tattle, reviewing, and magazinging. The number of these publications are as the leaves of the trees, the sands of the sea ; and their contents of such a nature, that to look into them is like looking for a grain of wheat in a hundred bushels of chaff. Opinions of books that the critics never read, and of things they cannot comprehend ; trumpery provincial antiquities ; puffings of quack authors, quack politicians, quack philanthropists, and quack doctors—new revivals of old absurdities, or new discoveries of exploded and forgotten things—anecdotes familiar to every general reader—together

with the fashions, lists of promotions, marriages and deaths, murders and executions—these constitute the great mass, among which, however, will occasionally be found an able scientific article, a well written essay, and a capital engraving. Indeed, it may with great truth be said, that these publications owe their greatest beauties to the engravers. The horses, dogs, fiddlers, players, and great men, are beautifully done.

It may possibly be news in your retired village to tell you that the editor of Blackwood's ferocious and bouncing magazine, is the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, and that he exceeds all living creatures in puffing his worthy father-in-law. It was he that christened him the "Great Unknown," if I do not mistake, and on all occasions he is foremost in his offerings of incense at the shrine of his idol. One might suppose that a sense of decorum would restrain him from this unblushing adulation; but they don't mind these things here, where it is almost as common for an author to puff his own book in the magazines, as for a quack doctor to be his own trumpeter in the newspapers. It is related to me, by persons whose opportunities of information are unquestionable, that if you could trace the approbation or censures of these magazines and reviews to their true source, they would, nine times in ten, be found to originate in personal, political, and religious antipathies or attachments, or in some holy alliance for mutual defence and mutual praises. In fact, such is the notorious prostitution of these reviews, that the real admirers of literature, who are not wedded to some political party or other, pay no sort of attention to their decisions, from a conviction that they originate in impure motives.

A great many books, which were barked at by the whole pack, have attained an extensive circulation, in spite of the hue and cry of canting hypocrisy, and canting criticism. Such has been the case with Lady Morgan's late works, even in spite of that fantastic affectation of style for which her ladyship is so notorious. On the other hand, a vast many books, which they have attempted, with all their might, to impose upon the patronage of the public, have already sunk into the bottomless pit of oblivion. It begins to be understood that this reviewing is a trade, and that their conductors must not fail to please their customers at all hazards. Hence, when any obnoxious opinions come abroad, and especially any that smack of republicanism, if the book be written with the pen of an angel, it stands no more chance of receiving quarter here, than a heretic among so many monks of the twelfth century. The author will be served by these literary judges like poor Naboth; he will be accused of blasphemy, and lose at least his reputation, if not, the harvest of this little vineyard. On



the contrary, if he should happen to be the greatest blockhead in the world, he may be sure of a good word, if he will only calumniate the whole mass of mankind, except the rich and noble, by calling them "deluded wretches," and placing their exertions to obtain bread to the account of an unprincipled disregard of all human obligations. It is in this way that writers attain to honours and rewards in England, just now, without the display of a single talent, except the talent of glossing over the corruptions of the higher, and insulting the distresses of the lower, orders.

Sir W. S. owes much of his success, and still more of his knighthood, to his politics, which are high tory. A curious affair came to light the other day, which lets us into the secret of Sir W.'s merits in the sight of my lord the king. People in America think he was knighted for his genius. It seems a paper was not long ago set up in Edinburgh, called the *Beacon*, which turned out even more libellous than *Blackwood's Magazine*, and exceeded that excellent production in its praises of Sir W. Almost every person of note, obnoxious on the score of his opposition to the court politics, was libelled in the grossest manner. Among these was a Mr. Stuart, who, in the course of his inquiries as to the persons responsible for the attack, discovered that the paper was patronised by an association of loyal persons, each of whom had signed a bond to contribute a hundred guineas to its support in case of necessity. Among these munificent patrons of literature were Sir W. S., and the lord advocate, each of whom had subscribed his hundred guineas. Upon this discovery, Stuart opened a correspondence with the lord advocate, which resulted in his lordship's discovering the libels on Mr. Stuart. The association for the encouragement of literature, hereupon finding the affair was likely to turn out rather serious, cancelled the bond, and dissolved partnership. The sole object of the *Beacon* was to single out persons, obnoxious from their opposition to the court, as objects for personal defamation. It attempted also a contest with the *Scotsman*, the most powerful and ably conducted newspaper in the three kingdoms. As was to be expected, it sunk under the struggle, and confined itself altogether to libels afterwards.

I have seen it stated in print, and not contradicted, to my knowledge, that Sir W. is actually co-proprietor and co-editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, which praises him so lustily. I merely give you the fact, without vouching for any thing. Thus much is certain, however, that this magazine is considered as the most virulent partisan of principles entirely at war with the happiness and prosperity of our people; that it

has been convicted of at least a dozen libels upon the characters of private individuals; and that it is noted particularly for its offensive articles concerning our country. In a late number of this work, is a tale, called "the Floridian Pirate," grossly libelling and calumniating the people of the southern and western States, and in which it is boldly insinuated, that to tie a planter to a tree, set fire to his house, and commence a piratical warfare against white men, are not only justifiable, but meritorious acts of heroism.

Of a similar character and principles, is the *New Monthly Magazine*. It is not so open and offensive in its hostility, but still there is scarcely a number appears, that does not squint ill-naturedly towards our country and its institutions. Ridicule of the peculiar habits of the people, their sanguine anticipations of the future, and other little peculiarities, are fair exercises of ingenuity and wit enough. This is what all nations indulge in towards each other. But when this satire degenerates into malignity, and proceeds, under the cover of various disguises, to undermine the respect of foreigners for our government and its institutions; to give distorted and offensive sketches of persons and things, calculated to degrade and disgrace a whole people, it passes the bounds of authorized ridicule, and becomes a distorter of truth and a mis-stater of facts. It becomes unworthy of our toleration, much more of our patronage.

I regret to see Mr. Campbell lending his name to such a publication as this. Though it may, perhaps, be for his immediate interest to implant in our country, a rooted antipathy for his name, and a lasting contempt for his principles, it might be worth his while to recollect, that the affectionate admiration of a new world is not to be lightly forfeited by one who values his immortal fame. To be read, admired, and cherished by growing millions, as the author of "Gertrude of Wyoming," the "Pleasures of Hope," and "Erin go Bragh," is something better in the end, than to be remembered hereafter, by perhaps thrice as many human beings as Britain now holds, as the petty editor of petty squibs and sarcasms, contemptible, indeed, in themselves, but deriving point and consequence from peculiar causes, that will possibly preserve them from merited oblivion. Men like Mr. Campbell would do well to bear in mind, that the time is not far distant, when they must look across the Atlantic for by far the greater proportion of their admirers, or enemies; and that the people of the United States are among those, of all others, the least likely to select, as objects of respect and veneration, writers who ridicule their institutions, or calumniate their country.

Next to the trade of magazing and reviewing, I find the biographers of the middling sort of great men in the greatest profusion here, and every day reminds me of Cowper's admirable epigram :—

“ O ! fond attempt to give a deathless lot  
To names ignoble, born to be forgot.”  
“ So when a child, as playful children use,  
Has burnt to tinder a stale worn out News,  
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,  
There goes my lady, and there goes the 'squire ;  
There goes the parson, most illustrious spaik,  
And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk !”

The particulars of these biographical budgets also call to mind a passage in an old author, where “ Memory” complains thus :—

“ I remember, in the age of Assaracus and Ninus, and about the wars of Thebes, and the siege of Troy, there were few things committed to my care but those that were well worth preserving ; but now, every trifle must be wrapt up in the volume of eternity. A rich pudding wife, or a cobbler, can't die, but I must immortalize them in an epitaph. A dog cannot commit in a nobleman's shoe, but it must be sprinkled in the chronicles ; so that I never could remember my treasury so full, or so empty, of honourable and truly heroic actions.”

One might be almost tempted to believe the writer of the foregoing passage had anticipated the present taste of the English public. If a clergyman, through the patronage of some great man, rises to the distinction of a stall ; if a doctor practises physic with tolerable success ; or a country squire owns a famous racer, or hunts a pack of staunch hounds, he is, in good time, pretty sure of a biography either in the magazines, or in quarto. Indeed, any man can have a place in the former, if he would only find his own likeness.

It is amazing to see with what facility a great book is here compiled concerning a little man. The incidents of his life ; his good or evil actions ; his importance, or his want of importance, are of no sort of consequence. These biographers are like French cooks, or Spanish inn-keepers, who can make an excellent dish out of a tom-cat, or a cow's heel. If the little man had any great men for his cotemporaries, or was cotemporary with any great events ; if he was at Oxford, Cambridge, Eton, or Harrow, with any body of distinguished rank, or who afterwards distinguished himself, and dropped him a letter now and then ; or if he was a member of some half-a-score of learned societies, provincial or foreign ; either of these fortunate coincidences is sufficient for a quarto royal. If he was

cotemporary with great men, a book can be made out of them ; if with great events, the author can pounce upon the history of the times ; if a member of learned societies, all the learned persons belonging to them may be made to contribute to the dignity of the hero ; but if he corresponded with illustrious men—the letters—the letters, my dear brother, are treasures of biography. If they were written in confidence, so much the better ; the little tittle tattle, the free opinions, domestic disclosures, and private scandal, are inestimable treasures, as furnishing irresistible attractions to the present literary taste.

Another characteristic feature of the present school of English literature is, the incredible appetite for black letter books, and old trash of every sort, which derives its sole value from its scarcity. More than one nobleman here, owe all the eclat they enjoy, independently of their rank and fortune, to their munificence in patronising old authors and printers, who have been dead for centuries. The worse a book is printed, and the more ridiculously quaint its title, the more they will give for the treasure. If they meet with a book, for instance, entitled and called “ The dolefulle Tragedye and delectable pleasaunte and merrie Comedye of Goodye Twooe Shooes,” or some such trumpery, printed with wooden blocks, they will give a couple of hundred guineas for it, provided it be the only copy in the world. But if there should chance to be another extant, its value is diminished a hundred fold. I happened, not long ago, to be present at the sale of the Duke of Roxburgh’s library, where Locke, Newton, Milton, Shakspeare, and others, went off for little or nothing, while a copy of “ Most righte, rare, and truly dyvertynge Ballads,” such as the beggars were wont to sing of Yore about Tower Hill, was purchased by a Mæcenas for a few hundred guineas, and a most valuable series of old play-bills brought still more. I must not omit to mention, that the fortunate purchasers not only had the pleasure of gaining the valuable acquisitions, but also got complimented in all the periodicals and diurnals, for their munificence in the encouragement of literature.

At this sale there was a most laughable contest between his grace of —— and the right honourable earl ——, for no less a treasure than a black letter copy of the history of the Three Wise Men of Gotham, printed by Wynkyn de Worde, in his worst manner. These noblemen were just beginning to nibble at the treasure, and the auctioneer, as well as the heirs of his grace of Roxburgh, were in expectation of a great windfall, when Sir ——, a famous physician, who is a sort of black letter oracle, observed, with an appearance of great indifference, that he had seen a copy at Lackington’s,

and another at a stall in Grub-street. The name of Grub-street was a death-blow to the "Three Wise Men," who were forthwith knocked down to some obscure person for little more than twenty times their real value. Since then it has been ascertained, that neither Lackington nor Grub-street can boast a copy, and it is shrewdly suspected Sir ——— raised the report with a view of purchasing the book himself, had he not been called off at the moment to attend the lap-dog of lady D——.

Let us now talk of little Walter Scott, who, though a tory creature, is one of the most pleasant, unaffected specimens of the *Genus Irritabile* in the world. By the way, he is a little lame, a circumstance that may account for the halting irregularity of his verse. Lord Byron, too, labours under a similar impediment in his walk; and, as his verse partakes of the like infirmity, it might be a curious speculation to inquire into the occult connexion between a lame leg and a lame couplet. But I must leave this matter to the dabblers in cause and effect. I believe there is no doubt of Sir Walter Scott being the person, who, in the bombastic phrase of the critics, is called the "Great Unknown." It is a fact tolerably well known, and if there were any doubt, the extravagant adulation of Blackwood's Magazine would resolve it. His reasons for preserving this affectation of the incognito, are quite clear to me. He wrote himself down in poetry before he began with prose, and that in a good measure by prematurely disclosing his name, and thus depriving his readers of the pleasure of wondering, than which nothing communicates a higher zest to a book. The benefits of invisibility are invaluable to authors, who can neither be hit by the critic, nor wounded by personal attacks, so long as they remain unseen. Besides, authors are a sort of divinity, very apt to turn out an Egyptian stork, or arrant mumbo jumbo, if you approach them too near. They should always keep out of the way, that the public may see nothing but the beauties of their minds. Like the famous chess-playing automaton, lately detected, genius loses half the admiration of the vulgar, so soon as they find there is a man in it.

Do not imagine, from these observations, that I am not a potent admirer of the "Great Unknown," alias, Sir Walter Scott. I have received too much pleasure from his prose writings not to feel grateful. Many an hour of ennui in this land of blue devils hath he whiled away—and many a lonely day of sickly confinement hath he made tolerable to me by the exertions, or, as it would seem, the relaxations of his genius. Shall not the sick man be grateful to him who administers to the mind, as well as to him that administers to the body? Besides, every

soul that ever knew him bears testimony to the worth of his private character, notwithstanding his being somewhat obnoxious on the score of his toryism. His pleasant, unaffected, unpretending manners are exemplary in a man—but, in a successful author, they are little less than miraculous. His heart, I am assured, is free from a single spark of that jealous irritability which divides men of genius, and prevents them from governing the republic of letters more despotically than a senate of Venice.

But for all this, I cannot allow him to be equal either to a Fielding or an Edgeworth, whatever may be the fashionable verdict of the day. In this opinion I am supported by the authority of those judges of the secret tribunal I spoke of, whose approbation, after all, is essentially necessary to the permanent fame of every living author. I will give you an abstract of their opinions, mixed up with some of my own, which last I desire you will hold in especial reverence. No doubt my fair cousin \* \* \* \*, who, as you inform me, not long ago set the bed-curtains on fire at two o'clock in the morning, by falling asleep over the Abbot, will be greatly affronted at seeing the Great Unknown so sacrilegiously undervalued.

The author of the *Waverley* novels has pursued a path, which saved him, in a great measure, the trouble of invention. The principal characters, as well as events, are historical; and where he has filled up the chasm with incidents of his own, I appeal to the judgment of reflecting persons, if he has not deviated into the wild impossibilities of romance? Where the characters are not absolutely historical, they are derived from old plays and ballads, which also furnish models of language for the actors. Indeed, it may be observed here, that not only the Great Unknown, but a vast number of the present race of poets, have poached pretty liberally in the old plays of Queen Elizabeth and James the First. These, after lying in oblivion, except in the care of these industrious poachers, for two centuries, have at length begun to excite attention, and will probably before long be sufficiently known to ensure the detection of modern plagiarists. Without descending to particularize these borrowings of the Great Unknown, it cannot but strike every reader, who takes the trouble to reflect on the incidents of the tale of *Kenilworth*, for instance, that they are principally taken from Miss Aikin's *Court of Elizabeth*, where they are purely historical; and that where the author has attempted to sketch from his own resources, he has almost invariably deviated into common place or caricature. Indeed, to me it appears, that through the whole of the work there is an air of reckless extravagance, a daring disregard to probability, that takes from the characters

every feature of historical likeness, and gives to historical facts every characteristic of improbability.

With the exception of Sir Hugh Robsart and Tressilian, there is almost a total absence of interesting characters. Queen Elizabeth is nothing but a coarse virago; Leicester a miserable dupe of a clumsy astrologer; and Sussex, Blount, Antony Foster, and the rest, very common persons. The originals of Lambourne, Giles Gosling, and Demetrius, may be found in a dozen of the old plays; but where to find Wayland Smith, the mysterious blacksmith, and Dicky Sledge, is more than I know; not within the limits of nature, certainly. I cannot tell how it is, but Dicky seems the identical Gilpin Horner of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, merely divested of his supernatural features. Raleigh is a fine personage in history; but apparently rather of too high an aim for our author, since the only incident of any consequence, illustrative of his character, introduced into the work, is that of the cloak, familiar to every school-boy. Raleigh is, of all the personages in the piece, the one of whom the author ought to have made the most, and he has made nothing.

The Pirate has just come out, and has shaken the popularity of the author so sensibly, that it begins to be rumoured, he will shortly proceed to give us a third edition of the old beauties of his mind, in the shape of a series of plays. This is certainly making the most of one's wealth, and reminds me of a cunning fellow of the beau monde, who lately passed the same quantity of silver through two editions, once in the shape of a service of plate, and once as a beautiful tea set, after which he coined it into money, dashed away in a curricule to the admiration of every body, and died game at last.

But Julia Mannering, Mr. Pleydell, and every character in the whole of this series of novels, which appertains to the class of real, actually existing beings, such as we live and move amongst at present, are destitute of all claim to vigour or originality. It is only necessary to place them beside those of Miss Edgeworth, to perceive at once, how much more easy it is to draw materials from history and tradition than from actual observation of life and manners. So with those incidents and events which can be referred to beings like ourselves, and to which we can apply the test of our own experience and observation. Nearly the same deplorable tameness and common-place characterize them all; and it is only when the author envelopes himself in the mists of time, and the obscurity of provincial tradition, that he attains to a new species of fiction, compounded of improbabilities stretched on the rack, and characters not altogether human, nor yet quite supernatural, such as abound in the records of popular superstition.

Hence the apparently wonderful facility with which the author compiles these novels. The experience of a whole life furnished Fielding with the characters and incidents of *Tom Jones*; but traditions and ballads of old times supply the "Great Unknown" with ample materials for this kind of writing. The very notes to Walter Scott's different poems, contain a mass of border lore, amply sufficient for half-a-dozen novels like "*Guy Mannering*" and "*Rob Roy*." If there be any exception to these remarks, it is in "*The Heart of Mid Lothian*," which presents to us two characters that belong to all times, and are perfect in their kind: I mean old Davie Deanes and his daughter Jeanie. They are sufficient to redeem all the old half-bred witches, and half-bred wizards, in the whole series, and possess an interest derived from the purest springs of nature and probability, far more intense and legitimate than all the rest of these extravagant creations of ignorance and superstition.

But with all these drawbacks, if such they be in the eyes of the present age, the Great Unknown is still a pearl among swine. He and Miss Edgeworth are the twin stars of Bœotia, and not only shine by their own light, but by the reflection of surrounding darkness. The one, as a painter of life as it is, the other of life as it was, is without a rival in the present times. The author of *Waverley* is a great second-hand artist; a capital pencil in copying old pictures, and colouring them afresh. What I particularly commend him for is, that though a friend to the government, he does not think it necessary to *cant*. There is a glow of vigorous freshness about him, so different from the faded, sickly, green and yellow tribes of cotemporary novelists, that to read one of his tales, is like contemplating a rich landscape, with the flowers of the spring, and the dews of the clear mellow morning, blooming and glittering upon it, and the pure and fragrant breeze playing in our faces.

But I cannot help thinking it is placing him where he ought not to be, to put him on a level with Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith and Miss Edgeworth. He belongs, I imagine, to a different class of beings; to a class of authors, who, when the charm of novelty expires, and curiosity is satisfied in the development of the story, will never be much relished or sought after for other and more lasting beauties.













